



# THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

The Only Publication authorized by the Hon. W. F. Cody (BUFFALO BILL)

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 15.

Price, Five Cents.

## BUFFALO BILL'S UNKNOWN ALLY

OR  
THE BRAND OF THE RED ARROW



BY  
THE AUTHOR OF  
"BUFFALO BILL"

"DON'T HALT, CONTINUE YOUR FLIGHT!" CRIED GENERAL CUSTER, WHILE BUFFALO BILL DREW REIN AND OPENED FIRE TO CHECK THE PURSUITERS.



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## BUFFALO BILL'S UNKNOWN ALLY;

OR,

### The Brand of the Red Arrow.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

#### CHAPTER I.

##### BUFFALO BILL SURPRISED.

horseman alone amid a vast, unbroken solitude of mountains and valley.

The horseman had drawn the splendid animal he rode halt, and calmly gazed upon the scene of natural beauty around him.

The man needs no description to introduce him to the more than to say that he was Buffalo Bill, the Great Border King, and at the time he was winning a name as the greatest of army scouts.

Individually he sat his horse, his dark, piercing eyes watchful of the scene about him—the watchfulness instinct, for, though he saw no danger, yet he knew that his life was in deadly peril.

Suddenly, as from the clouds, came two sharp reports and a shriek.

Instantly he drew rein and looked about him.

Then there came a rushing sound, as though from the wings of a thousand birds, and, glancing upward, bold as he was, and used to scenes of deadly peril, a cry escaped his lips.

At the same moment his horse squatted low, as if from an unseen terror, and then was reined sharply back by his rider.

And just in time!

Down a few feet in front of Buffalo Bill there fell a human form, as though from the clouds.

An exclamation of horror broke from the scout's lips at the fearful sight, while his horse stood snorting and trembling with fright.

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"Be still, Rocket!" cried the rider, and he sprang from his saddle and approached the mass of shattered humanity before him.

It was that of a man, bearded and repulsive-looking, the flesh still quivering, but stone dead.

Upward glanced the scout.

His eyes fell upon a cliff far above, from whence he knew the man must have fallen.

The shots told of a tragedy, and the wild shriek had come from the lips now silenced forever.

Sharply he scanned the cliff, but no human form was visible upon the crest.

No eye glanced down to see where the form had fallen.

To reach the cliff from where Buffalo Bill stood was a ride of several miles around to the upper trail, so he could but stand there and wonder.

"He wears the brand of the Gold Ghouls, in those gold-mounted weapons, so his life is well ended."

"But he is a human being, and I will not let him lie here to become food for the wolves," and, staking his horse out to feed, he took from his saddle a small hatchet, sought out a suitable spot, and began to dig a grave in the soft earth, close under the shelter of the cliff.

The man had at his back a blanket; in his belt was a gold-mounted revolver and bowie knife, and he had so fallen that neither was injured.

When the grave was dug, the body was wrapped in the blanket, the belt of arms were taken off, and the unfortunate man was consigned to his last resting-place.

A moment the scout stood, regarding the grave; then he remounted and rode on up the valley, still keeping close under the precipitous mountain-side.

The valley narrowed as he advanced, and soon terminated in a cañon, the sides of which towered far above, and over them tumbled the stream which wound down the vale.

Turning a bend in the valley, the scout suddenly halted, and his hand was upon his revolver in an instant.

Face to face, Buffalo Bill had come upon a girl who seemed also startled, and whose hand had drawn a weapon.

But the scout withdrew his grasp from his revolver and raised his hat with courtly grace, while he said in his pleasant way:

"Why, what are you doing here alone in these woods? for, in spite of your Indian costume, you are no redskin."

The one addressed was mounted upon a fine snow-white pony, the saddle and bridle of which were also of As-  
ian make.

"I am not in the danger here in these wilds, sir, you are, so I advise you to at once leave this de-  
land, Buffalo Bill," was the reply.

"You know me, and yet I have never seen you be-  
I am quite certain," the scout said, in deep surprise.

"There is but one man on this whole border who can answer your description, and that man is Buffalo Bill," the mysterious girl responded. "Are you the man?"

"So men call me; but who, may I ask, are you?"

"I cannot tell you. But I must go on my way now; I again warn you not to remain in this deadly land of Sioux. Go to the end of this cañon, and where the mountain trail crosses the brook, in the valley beyond you will find your friend."

"What friend?" asked the surprised scout.

"General Custer."

"Ha! have you seen him?"

"Yes, and he will be at the brook by the time you reach there, if you go at once."

"But do you mean that I shall leave you alone here?"

"Yes."

"A white girl?"

"Yes."

"This land is full of redskins."

"I know it well."

"Again I ask you who you are and why you are here?"

"I cannot tell," came that same answer, so often repeated.

"You must go with me, for I will not leave you."

The hand of the girl quickly dropped upon her revolver at the words of Buffalo Bill, and her eye flashed while she said, sharply:

"I prefer to remain, so don't attempt to drive me."

"As you please; but I spoke for your good."

"I know best what is for my good; but hasten, I will miss General Custer."

"One moment, please."

"Well?"

What were those shots fired upon the mountain, a week ago?"

"Ask General Custer. Now, good-by, Buffalo Bill, be warned to keep out of the land of the Sioux!"

he spoke to her horse, and the animal bounded forward, shooting by the scout like an arrow.

body was in a quandary. Who and what was the young girl who preferred to remain in that wild land to go with him?

He could not solve the mystery, and he was half tempted to take her trail; but remembering that she had General Custer was not far away, he must seek for

The daring general had come with Buffalo Bill on a tour into the land of the Sioux to endeavor to discover the villages of the redskins and their force.

They had parted to pass up different valleys; the scout had been chased by a band of redskins, and thus the two became separated, and Buffalo Bill was most anxious for the safety of his general; therefore he hastened gallop toward the spot indicated by the mysterious of the mountains.

had gone but half a mile when he discovered a man approaching through some timber ahead, for the cañon had now widened out into a valley beyond the tains.

tantly the scout prepared to greet a friend or foe. Other than a foe he had no expectation of seeing there, as it was to meet General Custer; but the horse now was a white animal, and the general had been led upon a dark bay steed.

as the horseman came nearer, the scout saw his name and said:

"Is the general; but he has changed horses!" Coming forward he took off his broad sombrero and on him.

"Avo, General Custer! I am glad to meet you for I have been most anxious about you," cried out Bill.

"I have been most anxious about myself, Cody," answered the general, with a light laugh, while he grasped hand of the scout and added:

"I about you, too, Bill, for I saw you were in hard with a score of Indians after you. How did you them?"

"Oh, I put Rocket to a leap they did not care to risk on their ponies, and it gave me a long start, and in the darkness that soon came on they could not follow my trail. But you have changed horses, general."

"Yes; and good as was my other, I have not lost by it, you see."

"No; that is a splendid animal; but where did you get him, general?"

"He was a present to me, Bill."

"Did a girl give him to you, sir?"

"Yes; and a beauty she is, too."

"Oh, I know her," declared Cody, indifferently.

"You know her?"

"Oh, yes, sir, and she's a daisy for good looks, general."

"Who is she, Bill?" asked General Custer, with deep interest.

"I cannot tell," and the scout smiled.

"Her very words! but who is she, Bill?"

"In truth, general, I cannot tell you, for I only made her acquaintance half an hour ago, and——"

"You have seen her, then?"

"Yes, sir, I came upon her back in the cañon; but you have seen her, too?"

"I have, and I was following her trail when I saw you; but where did she go?"

"On through the cañon, sir, and I would have trailed her, but she told me where to find you, and I came in search of you."

"We will trail her together, Bill, for I must know more of this strange creature; but, let me tell you how I met her."

And General Custer related to the scout how he had been enjoying the grand beauty of the scene from the mountain spur, and had been startled by her dashing into sight, pursued by a desperado.

So lost was he in contemplation of the scene of grandeur that he had not heard the quickly-flying feet of pursued and pursuer, nor the quick-drawn breath, like a hard-hunted deer, until the maiden had bounded around the spur and stopped directly below him.

He heard the girl's threat to drive the knife to her heart; but waited the movement of the man.

Then he saw her step to the edge of the precipice and look down, and he heard her words:

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"Stand back, or I take the leap!"

The man again paused, yet uttered no word, though he fingered the revolver he held, nervously.

"Let him take the leap!" came from the lips of General Custer.

A startled cry from the girl, a pistol-shot, then another, followed by a death-shriek; and the man took the leap, for the bullet of General Custer had pierced his heart.

So sudden had been her rescue, so unexpected, there, in that wilderness, that the young girl very nearly lost her nerve, and was for a moment in danger of toppling over the cliff, but she rallied and sprung away from the chasm edge.

"She would tell me nothing of herself, but said, as she saw that the man had killed my horse, that I would find another where the mountain trail crossed the brook, and to take my saddle and bridle with me. I did so, and discovered this splendid animal tied to a tree.

"I saw that a trail of two horses led from the mountain to the brook, and one track only came in this direction. This told me that the girl had led this horse there for me, and had then ridden off, so I took her trail, and here I am."

Buffalo Bill listened attentively to this story of the general, and then said:

"General, we are in the very heart of the Sioux country."

"Yes, I know that."

"I was glad of your company, and yet I was sorry to see you risk so much in coming here with me."

"Well, Cody, I'm here, so let us make the best of it."

"If I was alone, general, I would follow this girl's trail."

"Agreed! I go with you, for I wish to know who she is."

"Well, then, we will follow her trail together."

"And rescue her, for she is a captive of the Sioux, of course."

"She said not."

"She told you she was not a captive?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then what is she, Cody?"

"I can only reply in her words, sir—I cannot tell."

"Do you think any settler can have dared to settle among the Sioux?"

"I have not heard of any being such a fool, she would be certain death."

"Well, how else can her presence be accounted for?"

"I have heard of no such captive maiden among the Sioux, general."

"Nor I; but can it be that she is the daughter of a trapper who fell in love with some chief and went people with him?"

"She does not have the look of a girl that foolish."

"Then again I ask—who and what is she, Bill?"

"I have heard, general, of several renegade white men who have fled to the Sioux for safety."

"Ah, yes, and she may be the daughter of one of these men, reared in an Indian camp?"

"Yes, sir, but then she was no common person. A lady in looks and words, in spite of her costume."

"You are right, Bill; she was no ignorant girl, but talked well and looked the lady. We must solve this mystery."

### CHAPTER II.

#### TROUBLE.

The trail of the horse ridden by the unknown girl showed that she did not anticipate being followed, for she had not urged the animal out of a slow canter.

When Buffalo Bill and General Custer at last came in sight of her they were considerably startled to see the horse feeding close in under the shadow of the cliff face. She was bending over the grave of the desperado whose body the scout had buried.

"Why, she is throwing the earth out of the grave," said General Custer.

"She is indeed, general; but let us draw back a little, and sight and watch her."

This they did, and to their amazement they beheld the mangled body drawn up out of the grave, and a girl seemed to be searching in the pockets.

"By Jove! she is doing what I forgot to do," exclaims the scout.

"You took his belt of arms?"

"Yes, sir, they are on my saddle, but one revolver is missing."

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"He killed my horse with one, and it fell from his hand  
I shot him, and he staggered back over the cliff. But  
she girl picked it up and carried it off with her."

"Can it be that she is really robbing the dead, general?"  
asked Buffalo Bill.

"I do not understand it, Cody!"

"Nor I, sir, but see! She has taken a paper from his  
ocket and is reading it."

"Yes, sir, and places it in her bosom."

"Suppose we advance now?"

"All right, Bill," and mounting their ponies, General  
Custer and Buffalo Bill rode quickly forward.

The girl heard their horses' hoof-falls, started, bounded  
her pony, and springing upon his back, darted away  
the wind down the cañon.

"Shall we pursue, sir?"

"I don't half like it, Bill, for she seems determined to  
cid us. But we must rebury that poor wretch."

They rode forward once more and soon reached the  
spoiled grave.

The general shuddered, familiar as he was to such  
nes, when his eyes fell upon the mangled form of the  
n he had shot, and Buffalo Bill dismounted and quickly  
apped the body in the blanket.

Then he threw the loose earth out of the grave and  
nowed in it the limp form.

Having done this service to a fellow-being, they again  
inted to go on their way, for the shadows of night  
ast were coming on, and they had determined to give up  
to sowing the trail of the young girl. Buffalo Bill had  
climated the villages of the Sioux, so they decided to re-  
radon to the fort, many a mile away.

As they rode along, General Custer pointed to the neck  
gravis horse and said:

"Do you see that, Bill?"

Yes, 'sir, I noticed it before, and it is most cleverly  
e," and the eyes of the scout rested upon the white  
y bek of the horse ridden by the general, where was vis-  
and a red arrow.

The hair was seemingly dyed crimson; and most clev-  
do," executed, in the shape of an arrow.

I thought it was painted there, Bill, at first, but it is

No, general, the hair is stained, and it is Indian work,  
the best I ever saw."

"Can you read the sign, Bill?"

"It is doubtless the horse of some chief, whose name is  
Red Arrow."

"I guess you are right; but then the girl gave me the  
horse."

"True, sir, and I remember now that her horse had the  
same mark, though I did not more than notice it at the  
time."

"Her name cannot be Red Arrow, Bill."

"Hardly, sir."

"So we don't know any more than we did before."

"No, sir, but hark!"

They both drew rein quickly, for to their ears came the  
neigh of a horse, and, to prevent their own from reply-  
ing, in an instant the hands of the two riders grasped  
their animals' nostrils.

"General, I will go on ahead, on foot, and have a look  
out at the other end of the cañon, for that was the shrill  
neigh of an Indian pony."

So saying, Buffalo Bill gave General Custer his bridle-  
rein, and he moved ahead on foot.

He moved with the caution of an Indian, and soon ob-  
tained a position on the rocks where he could see the end  
of the cañon.

What he saw was by no means a cheerful sight, for  
half a hundred redskins blocked the mouth of the cañon.

"Whew!" exclaimed the scout, and convinced that the  
cañon was not the place for the general and himself, he  
hastily returned to where the former awaited him.

"Well, Bill?"

"General, there are half a hundred Sioux waiting for  
us at that end of the cañon, so suppose we don't go that  
way," suggested Cody, in his light-hearted way, which  
no peril could subdue.

"Agreed, Bill; I'd rather go the other way, anyhow,"  
was the response in the same spirit.

Arriving near the other end of the cañon, the scout  
suddenly came to a halt.

"Well, Bill?"

"General, Sioux are cunning devils, and I think I had  
better take a look on foot before we ride out into the  
valley."

"It is a good idea, Bill!"

The scout dismounted and once more went on ahead.  
In ten minutes he returned with the quiet remark:

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"We are in trouble, general, for the rest of the tribe are at this end of the cañon."

"We are in a trap, Bill, that is certain," said the general with a smile.

"Yes, sir, and a woman was at the bottom of it," laughed the scout.

"Borderman as I claim to be, I see no way out of the scrape, Cody."

The general looked up to the cañon walls upon either side as he spoke.

The cañon was like the small part of an hour-glass, connecting the two valleys that spread out from it, and though but half a mile in length, there was no way of leaving it after having entered it at one end or the other, for the sides were precipitous walls, rising to the height of from sixty to two hundred feet.

"We haven't got wings, general, and we need them now to get out of here," said the scout.

"We do, indeed."

"We can get in this little curve and stand the redskins off if they attack us, for they mean to come on at night, sir."

"You think they know we are here, Bill?"

"Sure! they have had an eye on us from the mountains, saw us ride into the cañon and swooped down upon the other side, and there they are, and here we are."

"Is there no hope?"

The question was asked without a quiver in the voice. "As long as there's life there's hope, general, and I don't think you are a man to say die any more than I am. If they attack us, and we go under, we will leave squaw widows behind, and I intend to take along as much Injun company to the happy hunting-grounds as I can. But, how high do you call that tree yonder?" and Buffalo Bill pointed to a scraggy pine growing on the top of the cliff.

"About seventy feet."

"So I think, sir, and our lariats will make eighty, while our stake-ropes will run as much more."

"But how can we get them up the tree?"

"I can only try to do so by throwing a rock, with one end of the lariat attached, and have it roll down the other side of the tree."

"If we can get the line around it, and both ends down here, we can climb up."

"Yes, but we'll have to desert our horses."

"True, general, but dearly as I love old Rocket, I'd my life better. They won't harm the horses, but if they catch us we will be slowly roasted alive."

"You are right, Bill; but it will be an accident if I can throw a rock so as to fall on the other side of the tree."

"It will be, sir, but I must try it, while you please k an eye up and down the cañon."

They were in a crescent-shaped space in the cañon where they had ample room and were concealed from any one coming up or down the narrow pass between the valleys.

Having selected a rock that was suitable, Buffalo Bill made it fast to the end of the lariat with strings cut from his neck-handkerchief. Then he stood back, and coiled the lariats and stake-ropes, all bound together, he swirled the rock around and around and gave it a jerk into the air.

Eagerly he watched it, while the general, from stand where he could see up and down the cañon, gazed to note the result.

It struck the wall a few feet below the tree and back again. Then it was thrown again, and again, though the tremendous strength of the scout sent it above and beyond the tree, it did not roll, as he had hoped, and fell upon the other side.

When his arm was tired out, General Custer took it, also tried, but with the same result, and darkness coming on, they were forced to give it up, for the rock was likely to fall back upon their heads.

"It's no use, Bill."

"No, general; we are in for it, I guess."

"You can think of no plan?"

"Did you notice any niche, like this one we are in, either side of the cañon, up or down, between here and the ends?"

"I noticed only that it was a solid wall, with the exception of this break where we are."

"I was in hopes there was some place where we could hide, and thus let the redskins pass us by in the dark, though we would, of course, have to leave our horses here."

"There is not a shelter a wolf could find."

"Then we must sit here and await the coming

redskins, and my plan is to open with a revolver in each hand, dash out upon them, and thus cut our way through—if we can."

"We can but try, Bill, and it will be death to remain, and no more to try to cut our way through, while the surprise will be in our favor."

"Well, sir, we will mount our horses and await the coming of the Sioux. When they get near we will charge together, and to the right, for that will carry us away from their villages."

"If either gets through, general, he can tell how the other died; but if neither of us escape the boys will find out some day how General Custer and Buffalo Bill were nuffed out, and I guess they'll think we were not loneome on the trail to the Spirit Land for want of redskin company," and the scout laughed recklessly.

Then the two brave men mounted their horses, drew a revolver in each hand, and sat waiting the dread ordeal.

A moment more and there came a sound in the cañon.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE MAID OF MYSTERY.

"General, that sound is behind us," Buffalo Bill announced.

"So I thought, Cody."

"I will take a look back yonder, for some redskins may make a motion to surprise us that way."

"How can they?"

By coming down as we hoped to go up—on a lariat."

"Ah, yes."

The two men had spoken in a whisper, and, slipping off his horse, the scout crept back into the little ravine, which only ran some forty feet into the solid wall of the cliff and was about half as wide again.

As he moved along under the precipice, he suddenly into something.

Instantly he halted and his hand clutched it.

"A lasso," he muttered.

Then he shrunk back and waited.

It seemed, as he thought and had said, that the redskins were coming down upon them from the cliff.

He felt the end of the lariat, and discovered a stone which he lashed to it.

This had made the sound he had heard, and it told one on the cliff that the lariat had touched ground.

"One at a time only will come down, and I'll be ready to welcome him," decided the scout, as he shrunk back closer into the shadow.

Soon the lariat began to sway to and fro.

"He is coming," was the scout's decision.

The lariat swayed more violently, and Buffalo Bill raised his revolver as he saw a form descending, and which, in the darkness, he supposed was a Sioux.

Hardly had he leveled the weapon when he happened to think that a shot might precipitate matters.

"Steel is safer now, and I will use it, and then, Mr. Sioux, I'll borrow your lariat to climb up on," muttered Cody, as he replaced the revolver and drew his bowie knife.

The form descending by the lariat was now but a few feet above the head of the scout, whose eyes were firmly fixed upon it.

A moment more and Buffalo Bill grasped the form—but it was not a Sioux brave. It was a woman!

"My God, girl! I nearly drove my knife into your heart," cried the scout, as he almost staggered back in astonishment at the narrow escape he had had of murdering a woman.

"You deemed me a Sioux warrior, Buffalo Bill?" was the quiet reply of the girl.

"Yes, I certainly did."

"I am not, you see; but where is General Custer?"

"Yonder; you can see him in the edge of the ravine."

"I see him, so go and bid him come here."

"He is watching for the coming of the redskins."

"They will not attack you for an hour yet, so do as I say."

The scout obeyed, and a moment after the general approached the girl, and said, with surprise:

"We meet again, miss, for Buffalo Bill told me who you were."

"Ah! who did he say that I am?" she asked.

"He said that you were the same strange creature we had both met during the day."

"I understand now, sir, your words, but I supposed you meant that he knew me."

"No, and I only wish that I did; but you came down from the clouds, I believe?"

"Yes, from the cliff."

"And why?"

"To save you from death."

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"Ah! how knew you of our danger?"

"It matters only that I know it, and have come to aid you."

"You are most kind."

"You were foolish to follow my trail."

"So I've thought ever since we got caught in this trap; but where are the Sioux?"

"At either end of the cañon."

"And they mean to attack us?"

"Yes, after a while, or rather to come here to attack you; but they will not find you here."

"I already owe you a favor, for I got the horse you left me."

"Yours was slain in my defense; but you must desert your horses again, for up this lariat is your only chance of escape."

"I will ascend first, and then you tie on your saddles and bridles and I will draw them up, after which you can come, and the scout will follow you."

"But why our saddles and bridles?"

"I have other horses awaiting you."

"Ah! but will you not get into trouble?"

"No."

"I will call the scout," and he walked away.

When General Custer returned with Buffalo Bill, the girl was gone.

She was half way up the lariat, and soon she disappeared over the edge of the cliff.

Then General Custer's saddle and equipments were tied on, and up they went.

A few moments passed; the rope descended and the scout's outfit was drawn up.

"Good-by, Rocket, old fellow, for I've got to leave you. Some day I hope to get you back, and the scalp of the Sioux who rides you," said Buffalo Bill.

Seizing the rope, the general now began to ascend.

It was no easy climb, with his boots and arms; but he went up like a sailor, hand over hand, and soon disappeared in the darkness above.

Buffalo Bill then grasped the lariats, for there were three together, and made the ascent.

He found that the girl had made the other end fast to the tree he had tried to make use of, and she was standing upon the cliff with General Custer as he reached the top.

She at once began to draw up the lariats, and coiled them about her, said simply:

"Take up your traps and follow me."

They both obeyed in silence, and she led them along the ridge for a distance of a mile, gliding like a shadow ahead of them.

Passing over the ridge, she began the descent, and after a hard walk they reached the valley, and held on their way until they came to the bank of a small pebbly stream.

In it, made fast to a lariat stretched across, between trees upon either bank, were three white horses.

They were so fastened that they stood in the water and could not reach the shore.

She unfastened the lariat stretched across, and it sprung into the stream, the water of which was up to knees.

Crossing to the other bank, she unfastened the fun rope-end and returned into the brook, from which, with a bound, she mounted the horse nearest to her.

"You will have to wade in and saddle your horses, for they must leave no track on the bank," she explained.

The general and the scout at once waded in, and minutes after were mounted.

"The trail where I lead you is rocky and will leave no sign. Now follow me."

So saying, the mysterious girl led the way downstream, Buffalo Bill and General Custer following in silence.

For half a mile they rode, the water now and again growing very shallow, and again deep enough to cause their horses to swim a few strokes, but the pebbly bottom leaving no trail.

At last they came to a ford that was often used by the redskins.

It was here that the other horse had been left by General Custer.

"Yonder lies your way, so take it, with the warning never to come into this Sioux country again. Good-bye."

She was off like an arrow, riding in the direction of the Sioux villages, while General Custer and Buffalo Bill upon their horses, gazing after her in utter amazement.

She had saved them from death by torture doubtless, and then deserted them without a word as to why she had done so, or who she was.

"Well, Bill, what do you think of that?" asked the

ll, when she had disappeared from sight in the mountain shadows.

"I am half-inclined to believe she is a spirit," was the half-serious, half-joking response of the bewildered scout. "General, we must give up that mystery now and head for the fort; but I will solve this riddle yet," decidedly spoke the scout.

"You promise me this, Bill, for that girl must not remain a captive among the redskins, and after she had saved our lives, as she has done, we owe it to our manhood to help her."

"If she needs help, general; but we must find out her secret at least, and I promise you I will do so. But, now the fort."

So saying, the scout led the way out of the stream, and owing the trail leading eastward, they pressed on at a rapid canter.

"These are good horses, Bill."

"They are indeed, sir."

The girl seems to have only white horses."

Yes, and so ghosts are said to have only snow-white horses," laughed the scout.

By Jove! Bill, but I half believe you think the girl is a ghost."

No, general, I don't believe in the supernatural; but certainly is a mysterious being, and but for her we would now be dead, or prisoners."

No, not prisoners, Bill, for when all hope is gone, rather than become a captive to die by the fiendish torture which the Sioux are adepts in, I would keep a bullet in my own heart.

do not fear death, as you know; but I fear such mishaps as these redskins can inflict," and General Custer related with an impressiveness which Buffalo Bill noticed at the time and remembered long after, when he had warred for so doing.

Till the gray dawn stole over the prairies, the general and the scout pressed on.

Then they halted in a clump of timber that fringed the bank of a prairie stream, for rest and breakfast, for they had their provision haversacks with them.

When they drew rein in the timber, and the light of day shone, Buffalo Bill pointed to the neck of his horse,

aid: "Here, general!"

"Ha! it is the brand of the Red Arrow!"

"Yes, sir, and your horse bears the same," and the scout motioned to the crimson mark upon the neck of the animal ridden by the general, and the counterpart of the brand upon his own horse.

The two animals which the mysterious "Maid of Mystery," as Buffalo Bill named her, had given to the general and the scout, were certainly very fine ones.

They were Indian ponies, rather larger than the average, and white as snow, excepting the Red Arrow which had been branded upon their necks in some mysterious manner.

They went along at an easy pace, showing no fatigue, and without other adventure the two friends, Custer and Cody, had arrived within a few miles of the first cabin of the settlements, when a distant shot reached their keen ears.

Dismounting, Buffalo Bill ran to the top of a ridge that hid the prairie beyond.

It might be a settler, or an officer from the fort, twenty miles away, hunting game; but then it might also be bloodthirsty redskins on a raid.

Reaching the ridge and glancing over, Buffalo Bill at once returned at a brisk run to his horse.

"What is it, Cody?" asked the general.

"Indians, general, and they are chasing the Border Belles for all they are worth," was the quick reply.

"Settler Vassar's daughters, do you mean?"

"Yes, general."

"How many Indians?"

"About a dozen, from my quick count of them."

"And they are firing on them, for hark!"

Several shots were heard, and Buffalo Bill, who had been tightening his saddle-girth, now mounted and said:

"We will head them off, sir."

"Certainly, Bill," and they dashed together over the ridge.

The scout was armed with a repeating rifle, and also was General Custer, for he always carried a weapon of that kind when he was out on scouting expeditions, and he was a dead shot also.

As they spured into sight over the ridge, they beheld an exciting scene half a mile away upon the prairie.

Their eyes first fell upon two persons, well mounted,

## THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES.

and urging their horses to their full speed in flight along the prairie valley.

Behind them came a dozen mounted redskins, driving their horses hard to overtake the fugitives, and occasionally firing, though seemingly to frighten them into halting, rather than with the intention of harming them.

The fugitives were young girls, eighteen and nineteen, respectively, and were known as the Border Belles.

They were sisters, and the only children of a well-to-do settler, Henry Vassar, by name.

The maidens were known as Pearl and Ruby, the former a blond, the latter a brunette. Admirers they had by the score, even in that wild land. Officers had met them at the fort, and the young settlers were all anxious to win favor in the eyes of Pearl and Ruby Vassar.

An educated man, once wealthy, their father had sought a home upon the Kansas border, and until their twelfth and thirteenth year, Pearl and Ruby had been reared in a life almost as wild as the Indians about them.

Mrs. Vassar died, and the settler had sold out his farm, sent his daughters to St. Louis to boarding-school, while he had gone to the gold mines.

After two years of indifferent success he had again gone to farming, but further out on the border, in Wyoming.

He had erected a spacious cabin, cleared a hundred acres of land, and made himself comfortable, after which he had sent for his daughters to come and join him.

Their early life on the prairies had given them a zest for just such a life, and they had gladly given up their boarding-school for the free life of the plains.

The wagon-train which brought them also brought odds and ends of various kinds to make their home comfortable, and it was not very long after their arrival before Sunset Ranch was a delightful abiding place.

Henry Vassar tilled his land and looked after his stock, and his daughters did the housework, and hunted, fished and rode over the prairies and mountains to their heart's delight.

These daughters it was that General Custer and Buffalo Bill now beheld flying for their lives before a dozen pursuing redskins.

### CHAPTER IV.

#### A FLYING FIGHT.

Once over a ridge, the general and Buffalo Bill were in a position to dash down into the valley and head off the two girls off, and could thus throw themselves between the pursued and their pursuers.

This they determined to do, and if their presence could not check the redskins, they could follow on after Ruby and Pearl in a running fight.

As they dashed to the rescue the wild warcry of Buffalo Bill, so well known to the Indians, burst from his lips, while General Custer waved his black sombrero around his head, and loud rung the word, as though giving command to his cavalrymen:

"Charge!"

Both pursued and pursuers heard that ringing war cry, that loud command, and the latter half drew his rein, while the former swerved from their course, though to meet those who so daringly came to their rescue.

Down the slope dashed the gallant Custer and the young scout, their repeating rifles ready for use.

With but an instant of hesitation, the redskins came, while they burst forth in defiant war cries, as though determined not to lose their game.

The Border Belles were known to ride always the fleetest horses, and yet the redskins had been steadily gaining upon them, and, but for the appearance of the general and the scout, would have overtaken them within the next mile or two.

"What is best, Bill?" asked General Custer, as he rode toward the Indians.

"You wheel alongside of the Belles, general, and go on with them, while I drop back to try my rifle on the fellows."

"You are always looking out for my safety, Custer, but this is not a case of General Custer, but as man, so we'll let the girls ride on alone, while we finish their battle for them."

Bill made no reply, and a moment after the maidens dashed up.

Their faces were flushed with excitement now, fear, for they knew that no two braver defenders could they find upon the border, as General Custer and Buffalo Bill were both known to them.

their hair had fallen down and hung in masses to the backs of their ponies. In their hands they each held a repeating rifle, though they had emptied them of their bullets when the pursuit first began, and had no cartridges with them.

Still, each had a revolver, which they had kept for use the last moment of hope.

"Don't halt; continue your flight!" cried Custer. "And you?" asked Ruby.

"Will drop back and try and keep those devils at bay."

"Well, we will drop back with you, for we are not big to desert those who take the chances you have to come to our aid—eh, sis?" said Ruby.

"No, indeed! But who'll lend me cartridges for my gun?"

"And me?"  
Here are some if they will fit your guns," the general answered.

While this conversation was going on the four had gone on at a run, General Custer and Buffalo Bill having ridden alongside the maidens without checking the speed of their horses.

Instead, also, of checking their pursuit, the redskins rode on, if possible, at a greater speed, and bullets began to patter fast about those in advance.

Riding a short distance in flight, while General Custer and the Border Belles dashed on, Buffalo Bill suddenly reined his horse up, threw his repeating rifle to his shoulder, and fired rapidly upon his pursuers.

"Avow, Bill!" cried Custer, while the sisters cheered, looking back, they saw a man fall from his horse and two couple of ponies go down.

"I wish it had been the other way," said the scout, as he rode on again.

"Two Indians and one pony, you mean?"

"Yes, general, only they are not redskins."

"Those are not Indians, General Custer."

"Are you sure, Cody?"

"Yes, sir; for they are mounted on American horses,

and are riding an Indian pony, while they do not give

now, I cry, redskins would, nor ride like them."

"I think they are white men disguised as Indians?"

"I am sure of it, sir."

"Well, Cody, you are generally correct, and may be now; so I will empty my rifle, and, I hope, do as well as you did."

As he spoke, General Custer reined up his horse and opened fire.

"We are free, general," cried Buffalo Bill.

"No, for see, my man has not fallen from his saddle, though wounded; but they still hold on in chase."

"Yes, sir; but I'll stop them for a moment!"

And Buffalo Bill halted, sprung to the ground, and throwing his rifle to his shoulder, took deliberate aim.

The pursuers seemed to know the man and what was coming, for they dropped low on their horses and swerved wildly from their direct course, as though to destroy that deadly aim.

But with the crack of the rifle a man dropped from his horse; a second shot caused another to reel in his saddle; a third wounded a horse, and a fourth brought an animal down, pinioning his rider's leg beneath him.

"That ends the chase, Bill," cried Custer, as the scout again mounted and the party dashed on, for neither the gallant officer nor the girls had continued their flight while Buffalo Bill had halted to fire.

"With two of their number dead, and as many wounded, they are a determined lot, general, if they continue the chase, for they must see that our rifles have a greater range."

"Yes, but they have had enough, for see, they are turning back."

This was true, and the four fugitives at once drew their tired horses down to a walk.

"General, when we reach yonder timber, you can go on with the young ladies. I shall go back on the trail, as I am anxious to find out who the scoundrels are."

"You don't want me to accompany you, Cody?"

"No, general, for I have not drawn an easy breath since you left the fort with me. I have a right to risk Buffalo Bill's life, but not General Custer's, sir."

The general laughed as he answered:

"All right, Bill; but a general should know what his scouts and soldiers have to go through."

"Yes, sir, and you know it about as well as any man in the army, from personal experience."

"But those fellows seem in a big hurry to get off now, and they are carrying their dead with them, wishing to

hide the fact that they are not redskins, and also, having recognized you, they will of course expect pursuit from the fort."

A few moments more and the timber was reached, and General Custer and the girls rode on toward the settlement, leaving the scout to follow on the trail of those who he had declared to be white men in the disguise of Indians.

The general was anxious to reach the fort, for he had already been gone longer than he intended, and knew that nothing short of a command not to go would deter the scout from following the trail of those he had declared were not Indians, but white men in the guise of such.

As Buffalo Bill's scouting expeditions were almost always alone, the commander felt that Cody was well capable of taking care of himself, though he was risking much to pursue a gang of desperadoes who had been but partially defeated in their attempted capture of the girls. Having recognized the scout, as they unquestionably did, the outlaws would suspect him of doing just what he had done, and thus lie in ambush for him.

As this thought came to Custer he suddenly drew rein and said aloud:

"I was wrong to allow Cody to go."

"Do you think they will suspect him following them and ambush him?" asked Ruby.

"You read my very fears, Miss Ruby."

"Can we not ride after him and recall him, sir?" asked Pearl.

"Are you afraid to go on alone, young ladies?"

"No, general, but we must do as Buffalo Bill said—return to the fort, for your life is too precious to risk it as you are doing, so we will go together and overtake the scout," said Ruby.

"Well, I cannot refuse such pleasant company, especially as I cannot get rid of you," laughed the general, and the three started back at a gallop.

But a brisk ride back to the spot where they parted with Buffalo Bill failed to discover just which way he had gone, though the general and the girls were all good trailers; so they were forced to give it up, and once more started homeward, the general seeming really anxious about the scout.

At last he asked:

"Pray tell me, Miss Pearl, how it was those reds if such they were, caught you so far from home?"

"Father left yesterday to go over to a stock where he had bought some cattle, and did not expect return until to-night, and this morning early an Indian boy came to the house with a note from father, asking to come to the Spring Valley and help him drive cattle home."

"But you could not have gone to the Spring Valley for you are off the trail."

"No, we were on our way when Ruby's quick saw some one in the timber ahead, and we rode around to avoid them, and out dashed those redskins."

"So you at once took to flight?"

"Yes, indeed we did, general, and, as they had headed off, we could only run down the valley," explained.

"I can hardly believe, with Cody, that they are redskins, though he has an eye that is not easily deceived."

"They seemed very determined to capture us, though they fired at us, did not appear anxious to do so."

"One of them rode a horse that I have heard described as an animal such as the chief of the Gold Ghouls he

"Ah! I recall the animal you refer to—spotted black and snow white, and the one who rode him as the leader," Custer remarked.

"Yes, sir, and those who have been so unfortunate to meet the Gold Ghouls say that their chief rides such a horse," added Ruby.

"So I have heard, and it goes to help out Cody's plan that they were white men in disguise, for those of us are up to all kinds of deviltry, and their chief has less seen you, fallen in love with you both, and, to decide which one he wished for his bride, determined to kidnap you both," Custer remarked in a bare tone, while Pearl said slyly:

"They say he is very handsome."

"They do not know, Miss Pearl, for he always wears a mask, I have heard."

The sun was just setting when at last the party reached up to the door of the Sunset Ranch, and the first to greet them was their father.

"Why, where have you been, you truants?" commanded. "I was going to scold you, as I fo

dinner awaiting me, but, as you have such pleasant  
y, I'll forgive you; so dismount, general, and  
r, sir," said Henry Vassar.

"ere have you been, father, that you were home so  
ind, but for General Custer, your daughters would  
inhere now?" Pearl said.

Buffalo Bill, too, for he and the general saved  
n being kidnapped," Ruby announced.

Var turned pale and anxiously asked:

"you mean it? Were you in danger?"

few words Pearl told of their narrow escape.

"what were you doing so far from home?"

ng to meet you, father, as your note ordered."

"note?"

ay, father, you look bewildered."

"Ruby, for I sent you no note."

maidens looked at each other in surprise, and then  
aral Custer, who said:

il young ladies told me, Mr. Vassar, that they had  
note from you, brought by an Indian boy, which  
is m to come to Spring Valley and help you drive  
o h me cattle you had purchased."

es tugh half a dozen head of cattle, it is true, but I  
s hem home without trouble, and more, I sent so  
tate.

m t does it mean?"

ran into the house and at once returned with the

un  
ide is not your writing, father?"

not, though it closely resembles my writing.  
dy' some underhand work in this."

l Custer took the note, which was written on the  
as note-book, and in pencil. He read it aloud as  
d,  
eter

bar ear Pearl:—I wish you and Ruby to mount your  
nies and come at once to the Spring Valley, to  
drive home the cattle I have bought, for they  
ays wild for me to handle them alone. I will wait  
by the Willow Spring, so come by the valley  
on't forget to ride your ponies that have been  
vers, for you will need them.

"YOUR FATHER."

"you say this letter is a forgery, Mr. Vassar?"  
for General Custer, for I reached home soon after

noon with my cattle, coming by the ridge trail, and had no  
trouble."

"What can it mean?" queried Pearl, anxiously.

"It means that a trap was set for us, and by some one  
who knows father's writing; yes, and about our home,  
too, for he wanted us to ride the cattle-driving ponies,  
which are not near so fleet as our horses.

"I tell you, Buffalo Bill was right, General Custer;  
those men were not redskins!" and Ruby's face flushed  
with indignation.

"You are right, Miss Ruby; Buffalo Bill read them  
well, and, as he is on their trail, we will know just who  
your intended kidnappers are," the general responded,  
while Pearl said, in a low tone:

"Yes, if they do not kill the brave scout."

## CHAPTER V.

### TRAILING FOES.

Buffalo Bill knew the peculiarities of each tribe, and  
could tell at a glance a Comanche from an Apache, a  
Sioux from a Pawnee, a Cheyenne from a Winnebago.

A look at the country, and with the instinct that the  
Indian and the brute creation have, he could tell where  
there was water to be found or a good camping-ground,  
and thus he read all other signs that others, less skilled,  
could not see.

In the pursuers of the two sisters his experienced  
eye had noted that there was a difference in the riding and  
actions of the horsemen from what Indians would be,  
and thus he felt certain that they were white men mas-  
querading in the guise of redskins.

With this belief in his mind, he was anxious to discover  
just who it was that were playing so bold a part.

As chief of scouts at the fort, it was his duty to solve  
border mysteries, and here was one that he felt should be  
looked into closely.

There were other foes upon that wild border than red-  
skins, for there was a band of outlaws known as Gold  
Ghouls who haunted the overland trails, robbing pony  
express riders, stage coaches, and now and then a gov-  
ernment wagon train.

Waging war upon their own race, these outlaws, it was  
said, were allies of the Sioux, and had their haunts in the  
fastnesses of the mountains, where there were not enough

soldiers to follow them, as it would take a large force to invade the Indian country.

"With the desire to discover just who these men were, Buffalo Bill started upon his lone trail.

But he was too cautious to follow them, expecting just what General Custer had dreaded, an ambuscade; so he watched them from a hiding-place, saw which way they went, and, knowing the country thoroughly, as he did, he divined the trail they would take.

So he made a flank movement of several miles, urged his horse to a good speed, and, getting ahead of the trail which he expected them to come, quietly decided to ambush them.

His knowledge of the ground told him about where they would camp for the night, and so hiding his horse in a secure retreat, and stripping him of his saddle and bridle, he staked him out to feed and rest, while he went on foot to a point which he knew that the horsemen must pass.

It was a clump of timber, an acre in size, upon the top of a knoll, and with scores of bowlders scattered about in it.

The trail led directly through the timber; so the scout sought a secure hiding-place among the rocks, not twenty yards from where the party must pass.

He presumed that some of the gang woudl speak, as they rode by, and he could know whether it was Indian or English, while he could see them distinctly enough to decide what they were, even if they passed by in silence.

Cutting a thick bush he placed it so as to conceal his head above the rocks, and yet permit him to see distinctly, and then he patiently waited.

It was nearly sunset, and he was beginning to feel anxious, fearing that, after all, they might have taken some other trail, when he saw a horseman ride over a rise in the prairie, a mile away.

"There they come, for I recognize that black and white horse I saw to-day. I wonder if it can be Carlos and his Gold Ghouls?" muttered Buffalo Bill, as he brought his rifle around for use, and loosened his revolvers in his belt—not that he meant to be desperate enough to attack single-handed a number of men, but he wished to be prepared, if by chance he should be discovered.

Behind the spotted horse came others, and soon six horsemen were in sight, while four men were on foot, evidently taking turns with their comrades in riding, as their ponies had been killed by the fire of Custer and the scout.

One of the horses carried a load, which the keen eye of Buffalo Bill soon saw were dead bodies.

"They would not bury their dead, as a grave would reveal who they are. A cunning man leads that band," thought Cody.

Along the trail they came, and, just as the sun behind the horizon they rode into the timber, and the leader came within easy pistol range of Buffalo Bill, he called out:

"We will camp here for the night, men, for the spring yonder in that pile of rocks."

The "pile of rocks" was where Buffalo Bill was waiting, and he knew that the spring was not twenty yards away.

The words of the leader had showed that the scout was right, for he was no Indian, though in the service of the Indians.

"I'm in for it," thought Cody, as he crouched in his rocky retreat and awaited what might follow.

The pretended Indians, meanwhile, circled around the pile of rocks and staked out their horses, while they went into camp.

The animals bearing the dead were relieved of hideous burdens, and a couple of the band which were wounded lay down near a fire which one of the Indians had built to cook the evening meal.

From his position Buffalo Bill could hear all that was said, and he heard the order given for two of the Indians to make a circuit of the camp to see that no enemies were near.

The fire had been built in between two rocks, and was sheltered by blankets that it could not been seen from a distance.

Then the men crouched about it and began to have a fee and broil venison steaks upon the coals.

The tempting odor reached the scout, and he confessed that he never was so hungry in his life, because he was debarred from joining in the meal.

He knew that, if discovered, it would be sure death to him, where there were such terrible odds against him.

"I was looking for a good point of observation, and got it," he concluded, with grim humor.

But he sat there, his rifle across his knees, his revolver ready, determined to abide the result.

The band might not remain all night, and it was important to stand a chance of not being discovered; but the odds in favor of his discovery were great.

As the men grouped about the fire, eating their meal, every word they uttered Buffalo Bill caught.

"I say, pard, we had a rough time of it to-day," said one.

"You bet we did, and we couldn't expect anything better when we tackled Custer and Cody."

"What on earth were they a doin' right in the neighborhood to git in our way?" said another.

"They made us lose the gals."

"For sure, for we was gainin' on 'em well when the general and Buffalo Bill chipped in."

ler cap'n won't be dead beat, though, for he means  
ture them gals, and he'll do it."

"I may take oath on that, pard, for when ther cap'n  
n to do a thing he gits thar."

"En that man is not their leader after all," muttered  
wo Bill, as he heard this, and he listened attentively  
ent followed.

"Ay, pard, what does Cap'n Carlos want with both  
the gals?"

"Gs got some deep little game on hand, you bet, thet  
n't know, in capturin' 'em both."

"They is beauties."

"A fact they is."

"One o' ther young settlers seems ter win 'em."

"The they hain't no fools; them gals o' Vassar's hain't,"

"Cry settlers, for they has ther giddy heads set on  
H from the fort."

"Whill, we did our best, and we lost 'em, and it's  
mnd the general we have to thank for it, and for  
ing of our comrades, too."

"Tt we'll even up some day on 'em, and don't you  
f it."

"None will."

"W you talk straight, pard's?"

"Gs mark them too men for our game, pard's."

"A chorus of yells in the affirmative followed this re-  
nd the leader said:

"To have reason to fear Cody, for he will track us  
nd it was to avoid this the captain made us play

"He

"Fe, we have reasons to fear Custer, for he will hang  
real. ire as he catches us; so I say, too, pard's, it's war-  
sund on Buffalo Bill and General Custer, and no  
agaip either of them."

"Atord the leader, and the men were only too anxious  
with him in the threat against the brave soldier  
s, h'l the scout, whom they so greatly feared.

"Pards, it is wearin' along, so let us turn in, for  
d h be going soon after midnight, so we don't dare  
the g until we get where the soldiers won't follow us.

"Going to find a soft rock, yonder, for my head,"

heir his blankets, the outlaw walked toward the  
rauge Buffalo Bill was crouched, ready to face the

"To-d

"Et an

## CHAPTER VI.

"In the LIKE AN APPARITION IN HIS PATH.

"Urged note to the maidens decided General Cus-  
ve a talk with the settler, with a view to discov-  
ell whence it had come; so he remained at Sun-  
n, and until quite a late hour they canvassed the

"Have you refused any of your numerous lovers of  
late, young ladies?" asked the general, seeming to think  
that therein would be a clew.

"I haven't had a chance," Pearl said, laughing.

"I'm too afraid of being an old maid to refuse an of-  
fer," Ruby replied, innocently.

"I must, however, disagree with you, and again ask  
my question," the general persisted.

"You don't think we would have such horrible fellows  
for lovers, as men who would kidnap us for refusing to  
marry them, general?"

"Yes, Miss Ruby, you might have just such lovers.  
This is an unsettled country, where, naturally, some  
rather desperate characters congregate! Who your  
neighbors are, or those you meet, you do not know, and  
appear they ever so honest, they may be members of the  
Gold Ghouls, for all you can find out," and the general  
spoke earnestly.

"General Custer, who are the Gold Ghouls?" asked  
Pearl.

"That is just what I am anxious to find out, Miss  
Pearl. I simply know them as a band of outlaws, I think  
in league with the Sioux, who haunt the overland trails,  
robbing stage-coaches, stealing horses, running off stock,  
and now and then pillaging a settler's home. Their chief  
is said to be one Carlos. More I cannot tell you; but I  
believe I will set Cody upon their track, for if any man  
can run them down, he can."

"He can, indeed, sir, and I believe he has a watch  
upon them as well as upon the Sioux," remarked Vassar.

"I would not be surprised if he found those whose  
trail he is now on, to see some of the Gold Ghouls gang,  
and I advise you young ladies not to take such long rides  
away from home as you have been doing, for at any  
moment we may expect a Sioux raid, not to speak of  
Carlos and his outlaws prowling about."

"But you have not answered my question about your  
discarded beaux, for if I knew that any one had received  
a refusal at the hands of either of you young ladies, I  
might be able to find a basis for the forged letter."

Pearl glanced at Ruby and Ruby at her sister; then  
both laughed.

Just then the watch-dogs began to bark, and going to  
the door the settler saw a horseman dismounting at the  
hitching post, and seemingly unmindful of the snarling  
brutes about him.

Calling off the dogs, the settler recognized his visitor  
as a young man who had settled down the valley ten  
miles away, some six months before, and who had quite  
a large cattle ranch.

"Ah, Mr. Golder, I am glad to see you. Get out, you  
brutes!" and with a kick at the dogs, Mr. Vassar greeted  
his visitor and led him into the sitting-room.

He was a handsome young fellow, scarcely over twenty-eight, with a bronzed, frank face, full of character and daring.

He was well dressed, particularly so for the border, as he wore a black velvet jacket, a silk shirt, gray corduroy pants and handsome cavalry boots, ornamented with spurs.

His sombrero was embroidered in the Mexican style and encircled by a gold cord, a miniature lariat.

In his black silk scarf glittered a diamond, and a ruby ring encircled the small finger of his left hand.

His weapons were of the finest make, and altogether he looked the gentleman plainsman.

He bowed low to the two sisters, and greeted with dignified courtesy General Custer, whom he had met before.

"It is rather late to make a call, Mr. Vassar, but I have been up the country to buy some cattle, and I noticed signs of Indians over in the valley, so thought I would stop by, and warn the young ladies not to venture too far from home."

"Have your scouts reported Indian signs about, general?"

"I have been away from the fort for some days, Mr. Golden; but I have seen Indian signs myself, and so have the young ladies, as they can tell you," the general responded.

"Yes, far more signs than we cared for," Ruby said, and she told of the chase of the afternoon.

"Now, this is too bad, general, that you and Buffalo Bill should be the heroes and rescue Miss Pearl and Miss Ruby. Why, there are a score of young settlers in this part of the country who would give their right arms to have been in your place; but I have heard it said that you and Cody were born for luck."

"I hope so," laughed the general, and soon after Golden took his leave, declining to remain all night as the settler urged him to do.

"That is one of the finest young fellows in the settlement, and I would like to know which one of you young ladies he is in love with," said General Custer.

"Both of us, he says, and I believe him, for he's sweet on me when Pearl is not around, and I know he is the same with her when I'm not about, though she won't admit it; but he's handsome, is he not, General Custer?"

"Very, and though the men at the fort first thought him a dandy and a tenderfoot, they soon changed their minds, for he has the pluck of a panther, is a dead shot, superb horseman, and when he has stayed over night at our camp has generally gone off with all the poker money the men had to put up against him."

"I like him very much, general; but I wish I knew more about him, and somehow, I think I have seen him be-

fore, though he says we never met until he came to the settlement," Vassar remarked.

"I wish he was in the army, for he'd make a splendid officer," Custer added, and then as it was late the general retired for the night.

At an early hour, after breakfast, the dashing general chief mounted his horse and rode away on the trail toward the fort.

He had not gone very far when he beheld a horseman rider in the trail before him.

One glance was sufficient to show General Custer that it was the mysterious "Maid of Mystery," appearing as an apparition before him, and that she was waiting for him was evident.

Hardly had General Custer's eyes fallen upon the mysterious maiden barring his way, when there came a clatter of hoofs behind him.

Instantly he wheeled and his hand dropped to his revolver, for he knew not whether to expect friend or foe.

Rapidly the hoof-beats fell, and there dashed into view a horseman.

"It is Scout Gaston," said the general, and removing his hand from his revolver he turned toward the girl. She had been a hundred yards away, in front of him; but now, she was not to be seen; and had disappeared.

The horseman, saluting his general, drew rein, for he was an army scout from the fort.

He was strangely like General Custer in face and, flattered by the resemblance, he had allowed his blonde hair to grow long; wore a sombrero, a light blouse, and affected the bearing of his commander.

He was a brave scout without, and was kept on as a courier between the line of forts on the frontier.

"Ah, general, you here and alone, and redskinned," he said with a reproachful manner, which his loving general brought forth.

"Yes, Gaston, I have been on a scout with Butch and am returning to the fort, while he has gone on another trail; but where have you seen redskins?"

"I was chased by them, sir, last night and up to now."

"You do seem to have ridden hard; but where, just from?"

"The Platte, sir, with dispatches."

"Well, give them to me, Gaston, and I will follow you at a slow pace while you ride on."

"You don't wish me as an escort, sir?"

"Oh, no, thank you, and you had better push forward to rest, for you may have to take the saddle again; and I wish to see some one on my way to the fort."

The courier saluted, and having handed over his dispatches, darted away and disappeared in the timber.

ester did not care to have him see the girl, as the might misunderstand her presence, and, having seen his trail, he cared not to ride on without discovering her motive in being there.

admitted to feeling a deep interest in the strange girl as she had saved his life in the mountains, and at same time refused to make known who she was, he now beheld her in the settlements, he was most anxious to learn all that he could of her movements.

while Gaston rode on, General Custer remained behind him, and glanced over the dispatches given by the scout.

the clatter of the hoofs of the rapidly-going horse died and the dispatches had been read, with an occasional glance over the paper to see whether the girl would reappear.

denly a hoof-fall was heard in the trail behind the general, and turning sharply he beheld her. She was mounted upon a snow-white horse, and the girl seemed to have been ridden hard.

on his neck the general now noticed the brand of the row. As he gazed fixedly at the girl, in the broad of the sunlight, he saw that the same brand, a small row, was upon her forehead.

attire was the same as when he had before seen her except that she was mounted, she was certainly the strange being whom he had saved from theado.

to meet again, miss, and most unexpectedly to me, I you," and General Custer raised his sombrero.

bowed, and replied:

"I meet again, sir, yes, and I am here to warn you

danger lies in your path."

danger lies in the path of every soldier," was the general, and he smiled in a way that showed

she was one to feel no fear.

lo death, sure and merciless, lies before you, General Custer, if you follow the trail you are now on," de-

But the strange girl,

and my faithful scout, Gaston, has just taken it," General Custer seemed as though about to press on

the courier.

herd, General Custer! for I utter no idle words, and

what awaits you on that trail," and the girl's voice

hung with earnestness.

I find my scout?"

will speak of him afterward. Thunder Cloud had

aimed in, in the cañon, you and Buffalo Bill, and

had frenzied with rage at your escape, but attributed it

agad from others, thinking you had managed to catch

in the tree by throwing it up there.

ovhad his warriors searching for your trail, and the

time the two horses were found coming toward the

settlement, so he knew that they could only be Buffalo Bill and you who had gone that way, but where you got your horses he could not tell.

"He discovered that you and the scout had parted company, and sending a force on Buffalo Bill's trail, he came on after you.

"He knew where you passed last night, and that you would come this way to the fort, this morning alone, and he lies in wait for you at Red Rock Crossing now, and with him are thirty braves."

"Good Heavens, girl! Then Gaston will be slain."

"I know it."

"Why in Heaven's name did you not tell me sooner?"

"I meant to warn you, and stood in your path when the scout appeared and I hid, for I did not wish to be seen by him. Better the soldier than the general, and, as he looks strangely like you he will be taken for you and killed, and Thunder Cloud will return to his people rejoicing in the belief that he has your scalp."

"My God! girl! is there no way to save poor Gaston?" and the general looked as though he meant to ride forward alone to his rescue.

"No, he is at the Red Rock by this time—hark!"

As the girl spoke there came to their ears a volley of rifle-shots, followed by a wild yell of triumph.

"Poor Gaston! He has died for me," said General Custer with deep emotion.

"No, he would have been shot anyhow, for his trail lay that way; but his resemblance to you will cause the Sioux to believe they have killed you, and there will be a general uprising on the border.

"The trail is safe now, General Custer, for Thunder Cloud and his braves will not wait there a moment after that shot; so go on your way; but be warned that there will be deadly work along this border after this."

She wheeled her horse as she spoke and dashed away, leaving General Custer seated upon his horse in a by no means enviable mood.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE SHOT AT THE RED ROCK.

The courier scout, Gaston, General Custer had liked, and he was sorry that he had met a fate that was intended for him, and yet he could not congratulate himself that he had escaped.

Gaston would have been killed, following the trail he was riding, had he not met him; but he wondered that the maiden, whoever she was, had not spoken so as to save the courier.

Could she have wished the scout to die and give the impression to Thunder Cloud and his warriors that they

had killed him, "the Yellow-Haired Chief," as the Indians called General Custer.

So musing, and wondering more and more who the strange girl was that knew so thoroughly the country, and so well the plans of the Sioux, and yet must live in the mountains where he had first met her, the general rode on his way.

But as he neared the Red Rock he was on the alert.

His rifle lay across his saddle ready for use, his eyes searched every bush and rock, and he rode on like a man prepared to fight or fly, as the case might be. The trail led down into a vale, crossing there the Red Rock, and boulders and underbrush were upon all sides. It was the very place for an ambush, the general well knew, and a row of graves on the banks of the stream showed that it had been taken advantage of for that purpose often before.

The spot was dreaded by scouts and soldiers alike, and stories were often told around the camp fires that the Red Rock Valley was haunted, while several old hunters and trappers who thoroughly believed it, had asserted that they had seen ghostly forms there.

With the heavy timber overhead, the undergrowth, and the hills, the place of crossing was almost like twilight, even at noonday, and a shadow seemed to fall upon the heart of General Custer as he rode into the gloomy little vale, for he expected to find there the mutilated remains of Gaston, the courier.

But he reached the brook and drew rein, for nobody yet met his gaze. There were signs there which his practiced eye read well, and he saw that there had been a struggle of some kind just where he stood.

Looking about him, he noted where redskins had crouched behind convenient rocks and trees, and then the tracks of a number of horses, unshod, led down the banks of the brook toward the prairie.

But nowhere was the dead body of Gaston visible.

Crossing the stream to where the row of graves was, he was startled to see a form suddenly appear before him; but though he quickly dropped his hand upon his revolver, for he had slung his rifle again at his back, he was too late, as he was already "covered" with a rifle.

"Hands up, General Custer, for you are my game!" cried the man sternly, and the muzzle of his rifle was covering the heart of the officer.

General Custer was a cool man in danger, and though daring to recklessness, was not one to throw his life away.

He saw before him a man who showed that he feared to have his face seen, as he wore over it a cloth mask. He was dressed in a buckskin suit, boots and slouched hat, and looked the desperado, as his bold act showed him to be.

At the threatening command General Custer unfolded his arms and said sternly:

"I will raise my hands in appeal, sir, only to make known what do you wish of me?"

"Do you refuse to put up your hands, General Custer?" asked the man.

"I do."

"Well, sir, before I kill you, I wish you to know that I have kept my threat to do so. I am Burton, who was sentenced to be shot for desertion—now you shall hear and—"

The words were not finished, for there came a sharp crack of a rifle from up on the hillside, and the man, following the bullet, was seen to run off in his tracks, his finger upon the trigger, causing his rifle to explode, and sending the bullet dangerous near the general's head.

When the man was speaking, General Custer, with arms folded, had his right hand on the pistol-butt of his revolver, and he meant to draw and risk the shot if necessary.

He knew the man to have deserted from the fort, and to have carried off a number of horses with him, which he stood on guard one night.

Tried for his crime, he was sentenced to be shot, but had escaped by digging out of the lock-up, and left a note stating that he would one day avenge himself by killing General Custer.

That he meant to keep his word there was no doubt, and the chances were strongly in favor of his doing so when there came the rifle shot from the hill and down upon him in his tracks.

With amazement, the general sprung forward toward the desperado lay, a bullet wound in his head, and perceived that he had nothing to fear from him, he turned back up on the hillside to discover who it was who had saved his life, for he felt that his chance of killing the desperado, under the circumstances, was one in a hundred.

A horse was flying quickly away through the brush, and upon his back was a rider.

"That girl again! Why, she seems my very self. I must know who she is!" and General Custer was off on in pursuit.

He had only gone a few bounds when he drew rein and said aloud:

"It is dangerous to chase her. I must find out another way who she is."

Riding back to the form of the deserter, he had gazed down upon it, while he muttered:

"Well, Burton, you met the death you intended for me; but I will not be revengeful now, so will see the soldiers from the fort to bury you."

So saying, he rode on his way along the trail, dreading at all that had occurred, and unable to un-

had become of Gaston, for he had no doubt but that Sioux had killed him.

had gone but a short distance when he saw a man approaching.

is the Surgeon Scout, Dr. Frank Powell, and I'll a high he took our trail to find us, fearing harm come to Buffalo Bill and myself. It is just like 1," said the general, and a moment after the hand-

surgeon of the fort met his chief and called out: was on your trail, for I feared trouble had befallen though you were with Buffalo Bill, the best man on frontier to have with you in time of need; but then Indians are about in force."

just like you, Powell, to look me up, and I thank and will say that it is only blind luck that I am still

u have been in great danger then, as I feared, sir; where is Buffalo Bill?"

guess he's all right, for if any man can take care of himself, Buffalo Bill is that man, and you are much n in that respect, Powell," and the general smiled. Thank you, sir; but I shall have to see if we cannot gress to pass a law that none of our generals shall she part of scouts, as you do, sir."

I like it, and wish to see for myself sometimes. eng why I went with Cody, and I'll tell you, Powell, rip, though I wish it to go no further."

no ainly not, sir."

ore are some things that I will make known, but d d one thing that I wish to solve in my own way,"

ster told of his and Buffalo Bill's going into the d country, there becoming separated, and all that andopened, adding:

I did not tell Settler Vassar and his pretty hairs about this mystery of the mountains, for I e keep the secret until it can be proven who she is.

saved Bill and myself when we were caught in the on, like rats in a trap, and she saved me from Cloud and his warriors a while ago, and again ry at deserter, Burton.

, what is she, and who is she, Surgeon Powell?" more than I can answer, sir."

dre you heard of such a person before?" sir."

out among the settlements, or in the Indian vil-

e ha general, I have not, and I am sure if she was a f the redskins, she would never be allowed to go inteme does.

ll set she has in reality shadowed you."

has, indeed, and what is strange, she has a red tra inted upon her forehead, from brow to brow,

and you see this one branded in crimson on the horse that she gave me?"

"I see it, sir."

"Bill's horse bears the same brand, and so does the animal she rides.

"They are all white horses, too, and splendid animals, and I am bewildered at the mystery that hangs about her."

"I cannot account for it, sir; but what about the man she killed in the Red Rock Valley?"

"Ah, yes, I will send men from the fort to bury him, simply saying that he attacked me and met his fate."

"And you could find no trace of Courier Gaston, sir?"

"None."

"Well, general, I will go on as I intended, and see if I can find Bill; and in the meantime will try and discover some trace of Gaston."

"I will be glad to have you do so, surgeon, and kindly leave a good trail which can be followed rapidly, for I will start out early to-morrow morning with a hundred men, for I feel sure that Cody will discover work for us to do, unless he is captured, and then he will need our aid."

"This is a good plan, general, and I will leave a well-marked trail.

"I will go to the Red Rock Valley, and after getting the directions that Thunder Cloud has taken, will push for where you last saw Buffalo Bill, and follow on after him."

With a warm grasp of the hand, General Custer and the surgeon parted.

The trail of the general's horse the surgeon readily followed, and approaching the spot where he had been told he would find the body of the deserter, he was surprised to discover it was not there.

The ground was stained red, and that the spot was where Burton had fallen, Powell did not doubt; but he had not been killed by the shot, or if killed, he had comrades near who had borne him off.

With his rifle ready for use the surgeon scout began a thorough search of the ground. The general's trail he followed readily, and there, on the hillside, he discovered the trail of the strange girl's horse, where she had ridden to the spot from whence she had fired upon the deserter and then gone away.

Not far off was a trace of where an animal had been hitched to a tree.

The trail led to the spot, and off again over the same track.

"This is where Burton left his horse, for here is his boot trail to the valley.

"What a pity the general did not dismount and examine him.

"Now to see about Gaston's trail."

This was soon found out, and the keen eye of the trailer read where his horse, shod, had been led off among the Indian ponies, unshod.

"Well, with the girl's trail, that of Burton, and this one of Gaston, and a desire to find Buffalo Bill, I have my hands full."

"But, somehow, I fear Bill may need help, so I'll go first in search of him," muttered the surgeon scout, as he rode on.

### CHAPTER VIII.

#### ON THE TRACK OF THE GHOULS.

When the leader of the outlaw band said that he was going to find the soft side of a rock, on which to make his bed, he stopped within six feet of Buffalo Bill.

There he seemed to be suited and made up his blanket bed, lying down upon it with little thought that he was covered by the muzzle of a repeating-rifle.

The scout did not move, he scarcely dared breathe, and he sat like one who had made up his mind to die game, if die he must.

He would ask no mercy, and none would be given.

Other outlaws followed the example of the leader and camped about among the rocks, until Buffalo Bill was in the very center of the men, any one of whom he could have almost touched with the end of his rifle.

It was a most critical position for a man, and it required just such nerves as the scout possessed not to break down under the painful ordeal.

His position, fortunately, was a crevice in the rocks, and here he sat waiting and watching.

The outlaws, excepting one who stood on guard, or walked around the camp as the humor suited him, were all asleep, and only the snoring of one man, and the cropping of grass of the horses not far away, broke the silence.

Thus the hours passed away, and never in his life before had sixty minutes seemed so near akin in time to sixty hours, as Buffalo Bill then thought them.

He had hoped to be able to leave his retreat when the men got to sleep; but they had unintentionally foiled this by camping about him on the rocks.

So he could but wait and wonder if they would leave without discovering him.

Midnight came and passed.

The horses had gotten tired of feeding and laid down to rest.

The sentinel alone of the band was awake and on the alert.

Buffalo Bill could see him now and then as he raised

up and peered over the rocks, passing from point to point.

At last two o'clock came, and the scout heard a step.

It was the sentinel coming to awaken his comrade.

"Come, pard, it's two hours to daylight, and we be moving, for we don't know who's on our trail," called out.

Like all men who sleep with their lives in danger, the outlaws were at once awake, and the work began, fitting ready for the march.

The horses were saddled, the dead bodies strapped on as before, the wounded men aided to mount, and the party moved off.

It was with difficulty that Buffalo Bill could restrain himself from uttering a wild war-whoop of delight.

His nerves had stood the strain, but he wished to relieve his suppressed feelings with a shout.

But he restrained from so doing, and taking the trail to where he had left his horse, he found him all right, and quickly lay down to gain some rest, for he needed none.

He was astir soon after sunrise, cooked his breakfast, and then mounting, rode off again on the trail.

"I know that they are, as I said they were Ghouls; but I will follow them to their retreat, and know where it is, and just what force they have," said the scout, as he struck the trail of the outlaws.

With the greatest caution he followed them, circling by a wide circuit every spot that he came to which was good place for an ambush.

He had again struck the trail after one of the movements, when suddenly he drew rein, for he saw some one in the path before him.

But after a glance he rode on once more, as he recognized the Girl of Mystery, his ally.

"What can she be doing here?"

"And yet it is not out of the way that she is here, as I am on the trail to where we last saw her," said the scout.

Calmly seated upon her horse she awaited his approach, and as he drew near she nodded pleasant as usual, raising his sombrero with marked respect, said as follows:

"Well, I had not hoped for the pleasure of seeing you soon again."

"I am here, Buffalo Bill, to save you from death," said the reply.

"Indeed! must I again owe you my life?" he said with a smile.

"You are pursuing the Gold Ghouls, who are as Sioux," said the girl.

"How do you know?"

"It matters little how I know, but such is the case,"

"I will not deny it."

"I hoped to track them to their retreat?" "You seem well informed."

"And I know that you are going straight to your destination?"

"For you are going into a trap."

"I said a one as that which you so nobly helped the Indians get out of?"

"And I warn you to return to the fort, for the Indians have gone there."

"I know this?"

"Pis I know that he was ambushed on the way." "What has harm befallen the general?" cried the scout.

"But he was never nearer death than he was this night, when he sent you to tell me what occurred?"

"I am glad to hear you say so."

"You see him, then. And tell him you are men whom you have discovered are Gold Ghouls in disguise."

"Do not wish me to follow the Gold Ghouls?"

"Are they to you?"

"Our safety I am looking after now."

"You know these Gold Ghouls?"

"I am silent."

"How Carlos?"

"I remained silent."

"Yes, after all, you know the Gold Ghouls; in fact, be—"

"As you hardly tell, for I was going to say in league with them?"

"Are you?"

"Don't tell."

"She is allies with the Sioux, or at least the red men shelter in their country, and they have a home, and you certainly have a wonderful knowledge of mountains and prairies, and must have power, as you do."

"I see no reply, and the scout said kindly:

"No life for you to lead, for you are young, you are far above the average border girl, and yet a companion of—"

"He said and she asked bluntly:

"Who?"

"Indians."

"Replying to Buffalo Bill's remark the strange girl said:

"He proved to you that your life is in danger."

"You have not followed closely on this trail, but made wide circuits to avoid being entrapped."

"You are shrewd, and skilled in Indian cunning, and yet you are but a man and can be overcome."

"Go back on this trail, and when you come to the second hill from here, dismount, go cautiously toward a thicket of pines, and you will find there a man lying in wait to report the coming of any one on the track of the Gold Ghouls."

"From his point of lookout he can see across the plain several miles, and you were not seen by him, as you left the trail and came around by the ridge."

"How know you this?"

"It matters not; but I know it, so heed my warning and return."

"The man is a Gold Ghoul?"

"Yes."

"I will return."

"I am glad to hear you say so."

"You will not tell me something of yourself?"

"No."

"I am sorry, but I thank you for what you have done for me."

"Good-by, and be on the watch on your border, for there is trouble not far away."

"From whom?"

"I can say no more."

"Shall I take this trail back?"

"Yes."

"And the Gold Ghoul on watch?"

"I have nothing to do with him."

"Suppose I kill him?"

"That is your affair, not mine. Good-by."

She wheeled her horse as she spoke and rode rapidly away, while the scout gazed after her and said aloud:

"She is a remarkable creature, that is certain; but I shall heed her warning and take the back trail, for I wish to make the acquaintance of the Gold Ghoul she said was on the watch."

So saying, he rode back on the Gold Ghoul's trail.

## CHAPTER IX.

### GASTON, THE COURIER.

Little dreaming of danger, when he had passed through the country where he expected to meet with an attack at any moment, Gaston, the courier, rode on, after having met General Custer and given up to him his dispatches.

He was surprised that the general had remained behind alone, but kept his surprise to himself, and rode on his way.

He had been in the saddle all night, and leaving his

horse to keep the trail, dropped into a nod as he went along.

Suddenly he was awakened by a number of shots, a couple of lariats were thrown over him, his horse was seized, and he was dragged from his saddle before he could offer the slightest resistance.

Had he not been caught napping; resistance would have been in vain against the half-hundred Sioux that had surprised him.

They had simply fired in the air, not intending to hit him, and, to his amazement, they did not harm him, other than to somewhat roughly bind him to his horse.

Then they ran for their ponies, hidden in the thickets on the hillside, and set off at a gallop across the prairies.

Again, to his surprise, the courier was placed alongside of the great chief, Thunder Cloud, the two riding together.

Gaston took his capture coolly.

He was a brave man, and he had no hope of escape, but his heart did not fail him.

The vilest torture he expected would be his fate, and yet he would show his captors that he was no coward.

At last the secret of his capture and treatment leaked out.

Thunder Cloud was a young chief, who spoke the language of his foes, the palefaces, though it was to a limited extent.

So he said, by way of showing the prisoner his own greatness:

"Thunder Cloud great chief."

"You think so, do you?" returned Gaston.

"Have got big white chief Yellow Hair at last."

Gaston started.

He knew that the Sioux called General Custer the Yellow-Haired Chief.

He was proud of his resemblance to the general, and the fact that he had met him not far from where he had been captured, proved that the redskins had been lying in wait for the gallant commander of Fort Fearless.

"I see it all; they think they have got the general."

"Let them think so, and if they torture me to death, as they will, I will die as gamely as my noble general would die."

So he mused, and then he said aloud:

"Well, what does Thunder Cloud intend to do with Yellow Hair?"

"Kill him."

"That's what I thought, but when?"

"Have big pow-wow in village."

"I don't doubt it, and I'll be the chief mourner," muttered Gaston.

"Make paleface cry."

"You're a liar there, General Thunder Cloud, for pale-

face soldiers leave their tears with their families when they enlist."

"Burn Yellow Hair."

"Many a brave man has been burned before me by your murderous redskins."

"Want Pa-e-has-ka's scalp, too," said Thunder Cloud, referring to Buffalo Bill by his Indian name.

"You'll have to get it, then, chief."

"Want mighty medicine-man scalp, too."

"White Beaver, the surgeon scout?"

"Yes."

"There's another scalp you'll find hard to get. You want the earth, Injun; but when do you intend getting it into this wholesale hair business?"

"Don't know paleface talk."

"Oh! you don't understand?"

"Ugh!"

"When do you intend getting these scalps? speak of?"

"Pretty soon."

Gaston laughed, and Thunder Cloud scowled, but remained silent.

Pushing rapidly on, they reached the Indian village during the night.

The village was a large one, and the headan-panther, Panther Eye, the old medicine-man, and their Thunder Cloud, who had taken his aged father during the war chief.

No better place could have been selected for a camp than the one which Thunder Cloud had chosen. The approach in the mountains was almost inaccessible, once there, a number of fertile valleys surrounded through which wound a stream as clear as crystal.

The whole mountain-top was a valley, and the village were a natural fortress.

Arriving in camp with their prisoner, the Indians most went mad with joy at the belief that the Yellow-Haired Chief of the paleface braves had surrendered.

For safe keeping the supposed general was carried into the medicine lodge of old Panther Eye, while the tepee was but a few steps away.

In spite of his age, Panther Eye was feared by all of his people, even the great Thunder Cloud trembled at the awe of him, and when he ordered that the prisoner should be confined in the medicine lodge it was done. The scout was left alone with his bitter thoughts, but he did not doubt but that the morrow would bring him death by the most cruel torture.

A sentinel, silent as a bronze statue, stood guard out, and when the uproar in the village died down, strange as it may seem under the circumstances,

into a peaceful sleep, his dreams undisturbed that the Indians intended should be his.

It is customary for the conscience of an Indian to trouble him, unless it smites him for not having done an act of cruelty which he had neglected.

There had been one thing that old Panther Eye had regretted.

He had captured a paleface maiden on one occasion and taken her to their camp, then in another part of the

country he was, Panther Eye had claimed her for his only means of saving her from death. He used, she must die.

A nun, taken from her post of duty in a settlement, she had gone to nurse the sick during an

epidemic. In face and form, in her robe of a nun she looked so, and her attire and the cross she wore protected her from harm.

Panther Eye had fallen in love with her in his heart, and he was deaf to all of her pleadings.

He talked to her in English, which he understood, and let her return to her people.

He told her him that she was a child of the Great Spirit, and that he would let her die at the stake rather than to become his wife.

The camp was not to be moved, and, turning upon his horse:

"Unless the Great Spirit calls to his child to come!" he said. Around she dashed from him along the ridge, where there was a high cliff overhanging a deep ravine hundreds of feet below.

He dared not stay her progress, for one who would commit suicide, in the eyes of the Indians, is sacred.

He saw her purpose, and for once the redskins were afraid while their captive fled from them.

Leaving the cliff, and seeing that she was not followed, the captive nun turned and looked back at the

Indians. She raised her hands, as though in prayer, and went over the cliff.

The beautiful nun so affected old Panther Eye that he remained in his tepee for days.

He awoke forth one night, but it was at the cry that the nun's spirit had come back from the hunting grounds, and was walking through

the woods with horror at the form gliding along, rather than the redskins shrunk from her path in fear.

The moon shone brightly, and all saw the slender

form, clad in the black garb of a nun, and watched her until she walked off to the woods and disappeared.

Then the old chief gave orders that the village should be removed from that spot, and another camping-place was found half a hundred miles away.

But still, at the full of the moon, the nun's spirit appeared there, and was wont to glide through the village.

Again the redskins moved, and this time it was to the valley on the mountain-top, where they dwelt at the time this story opens.

But there also had the nun been seen, and it was said that old Panther Eye was failing under the dread sight.

The night after the coming of Gaston, the courier, as a prisoner to the Sioux village, the warrior who stood on guard over him at the Medicine Lodge was startled to have the nun's spirit suddenly appear before him.

He was a young brave, who would fight his weight in wildcats, but drew the line at any visitor from the happy hunting-grounds, and he trembled violently as he saw the sable-clad form approach.

He did not run away, however, and, approaching close to him, the spirit nun beckoned that he should follow.

He obeyed without an instant of hesitation.

The Indian was scared half out of his wits. She placed him upon a rock, built a small fire of sticks, gave him a pipe of tobacco; all without uttering a word, and then turned away.

Silently she glided off in the darkness and disappeared.

The young warrior knew that he had been selected by the "Black Spirit," as she was called, to perform some duty—that he had been put on duty there to keep watch until the fire burned out completely.

He dared not leave the spot, and so sat there in silence awaiting the outcome, leaving the prisoner alone in the Medicine Lodge.

But the black-robed form had vanished as quickly as she had come, and was hastening back through the timber toward the Indian village.

Entering it, all was silent, except the whine of some hungry dog skulking about, and she went boldly to the Medicine Lodge.

Disappearing within, in ten minutes she came out again.

But she was not alone. With her was Gaston, the courier.

He walked slowly and with an effort, from having been so long and securely bound, and yet he followed her with the air of a man who knew that his life depended upon it.

Out into the timber she led him, to where she had taken a horse.

Then she pointed down the hillside, as indicative of her meaning that the scout should go in that direction.

"One moment, please," he said, eagerly.

But she made an impatient gesture and still pointed down the hill.

"To whom do I owe my life?" he urged.

She turned in silence and retraced her way toward the Indian village, leaving the courier standing and gazing after her in wonder at his release by one who appeared to be a nun, in an Indian village, and whose conduct was so very strange.

## CHAPTER X.

### AN AMBUSHED FOE.

Having been forced by his good common sense to turn back on the trail he was following, after the warning of the mysterious girl who had before served him so well, Buffalo Bill felt in a very good humor for a fracas with the man whom she had said was watching on the ridge.

Had she told him of this man to warn him of danger there, or because she wished to get rid of the individual on watch, by an encounter with him, Buffalo Bill could not understand.

If she was a white captive among the Indians, why did she not leave when the opportunity was offered to her?

If she was the friend of the Gold Ghoul, why did she tell him where there was one on the watch for his coming along the trail from the other direction?

These questions the scout could not answer, and so he dismissed them from his thoughts, and at once determined to "interview" the Gold Ghoul in Indian guise who was waiting on the ridge, to see if the kidnapping party were followed by Buffalo Bill or others.

Arriving in sight of the point of lookout, where the girl had said the Gold Ghoul was on picket duty, Buffalo Bill made a flank movement, intending to leave his horse at a safe distance and then proceed on foot in quest of the man he was now anxious to find.

But Buffalo Bill had not counted on one thing, nor had the Girl of Mystery, and that was the fact that her watcher might leave his post before the scout arrived.

This the Gold Ghoul did, for he had orders to wait a certain time, and then come on to the retreat.

The "certain time" expired about the time that Buffalo Bill started to search for him, and he, from his better point of observation on the hill, saw the scout coming toward the ridge.

Instantly he decided to ambush the man that he and his outlaw comrades so feared, for he knew Buffalo Bill by sight, and could not mistake him now.

How he got around him he did not then stop to consider, when he had been looking for him, if he came at all, from the opposite direction.

But there he was, sure enough, and he meant to kill him, and thus make a hero of himself for all time.

So he sprung from his horse and ran to a <sup>so</sup> which would afford him good shelter, and crouched down awaiting the coming of the scou

A couple of hundred yards away the scou  
He seemed about to strike off in another d

Was it fate that led him to hold on his way, i  
would bring him near the rock, yes, within un  
of it?

The Gold Ghoul was a large man, and tri  
toggery from head to foot.

His face was painted, too, or, rather, ha  
the paint was rubbing off, and it left him kaf  
hideous.

He got his rifle ready, rested the muzzle up,  
and waited.

About the rock were growing several dwarf  
one of these sheltered the Gold Ghoul well.

Nearer came the scout, and soon he was in  
pistol range.

Then came the time for the Gold Ghoul to  
deadly, cowardly act.

He took a deadly aim directly at the head of  
and with a hand as firm as the rock on which he  
rifle-barrel.

He was sure of his victim, so he did not  
nervous.

Then the forefinger touched the trigger, and  
snapped!

A curse broke from the Gold Ghoul's lips as  
snow-white horse of the scout wheel upon h  
as though upon a pivot, and attempt to dash

But he was checked by a strong hand, w  
again, facing his foe, the spurs sunk deep  
revolver in hand, Buffalo Bill charged direc  
ambush.

It had not taken a second of time, and  
who or what he was to meet, for it was a  
where he had expected to find the Gold Gh

But he meant to face his foe in ambush.

The Gold Ghoul was almost unnerved by  
ping of the cap on the rifle.

He hastily dropped the useless weapon  
revolver, and his shot resounded with one fr

He was flurried, however, and his aim was  
for it did not find the heart it was sent in

Instead, it passed through the left arm o

But his aim had been more deadly, f  
reached the heart of the Ghoul, who, falling Bi  
this time killing the white horse of Buffal

Down went the animal, and his rider is le  
the ground beneath him.

But he still grasped his trusty revolver t  
fight.

re was no need of it, for the shot that killed the  
rse had been the last shot of the Gold Ghoul,  
dead in his tracks.

"I finished him," coolly muttered Buffalo Bill,  
he turned his attention to extricating himself  
position, which, with his horse pinning him  
lying on his leg, which was bruised badly, and  
bound in his arm, was by no means a pleasant  
one, horseless, almost helpless, the scout knew  
peril.

It was not far away.

Powell struck the trail of Buffalo Bill, fol-  
after the Gold Ghouls.

erent flank movements he made from the trail  
so, having studied the hoof-tracks of the horse  
daring scout was riding.

ing that it each time returned to the large trail  
outlaws, the surgeon scout understood that the  
Buffalo Bill for thus diverging was not to be  
at any point he noted as favorable for am-  
eeling that he could make better time by press-  
on, he did so, in each case noting where the  
the track and returned to it again.

he came to where he had to cross the prairie-  
open to the eye of any one on the ridge

not to boldly push across it, so followed the  
scout where it diverged to the left.

the valley miles below, and under the shelter  
es that fringed a stream, which would pre-  
seen by any one upon the ridge.

anked the ridge, reached the spot where the  
iet, that of the strange girl and Buffalo Bill,  
eering who it could be that had been there with  
iree again set out upon the work before him.

met Bill here and turned him back," he  
rode on.

ot gone very far before he heard the report

sh.  
ed  
upon  
e fro  
in s  
allng!  
ffalo  
ver to  
e drew rein, for he knew he was in a coun-  
behoved him to be most cautious.

o other firing, he again advanced slowly  
rifle ready.

covered something ahead, upon which his  
im riveted for an instant.

ove was to spur forward at a gallop, and a  
m of he had drawn rein and sprung from his  
ly, f

! Bill, are you badly hurt?" he cried, anx-  
bent over the scout, who had been endeav-  
er leg out from beneath the dead horse.

than glad to see you, Doc, for, though I'm  
ver to. I'm in a bad fix," said Buffalo Bill.

With an exertion of his great strength, the surgeon  
scout drew the horse from off the leg of Buffalo Bill, and  
then aided the other to a comfortable position.

"What is it?" he asked, kindly.

"It lies over yonder in the pines, a white man in In-  
dian paint, and the man that was left behind on the trail  
to see if they were followed."

The surgeon walked over to the thicket and bent over  
the form of the man lying there.

"Dead, of course, for Buffalo Bill does not waste  
powder and lead.

"Yes, he's white and disguised as an Indian; but he's  
got a horse somewhere, I guess, and the animal will  
come in handy for Bill.

"He's dead, Bill," he said, returning to where the scout  
sat rubbing his wounded arm and bruised leg.

"Oh, yes, Doc; I knew that."

"His horse cannot be far away. I'll look him up, for  
I wish to get you away from this place, to where there  
is a good camping-place so I can fix you up."

"I guess I'll need it, Doc; but look up on the hill yon-  
der for his horse."

This the surgeon did, mounting his own horse and  
riding a few hundred yards away.

He soon returned, leading a very fair animal with him,  
with the saddle, bridle and outfit of the dead outlaw  
upon him.

"He'll do," said Buffalo Bill, laconically.

"Yes; and I'll soon have him ready for you," and he  
stripped off the outlaw outfit from the horse and put that  
of Buffalo Bill in its place.

"Now we must be off, Bill."

"Guess we better not leave yonder fellow to the wolves,  
Doc, for he's human."

"You are right, Bill. I had forgotten him," and the  
surgeon hunted up a burying-place for the body.

It was soon found; a crevice in the rocks, a little earth,  
loosened with a bowie-knife, and brought in the outlaw's  
blanket, was thrown upon him.

Then the surgeon aided the scout to mount, and they  
rode away toward a little stream that came dashing down  
the hillside, and which Buffalo Bill knew of.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE TWO CHIEFS.

When morning came in the village of Thunder Cloud,  
there was consternation among the red inhabitants.

The prisoner was gone!

There was no denying this fact, and the Indians were  
in the wildest rage.

The brave, Owl Eyes, the most trusted of all the young

warriors of the tribe, and one who was noted for his sleeplessness, had also disappeared, strange to say. Not even the old seer, Panther Eye, could solve the mystery.

He had heard no sound during the night, and it was known that, old as he was, he slept like a watch-dog.

There were too many beaten paths and tracks through the village to attempt to trail the prisoner or his guard.

Only this fact the redskins knew, that the man they believed to be General Custer, and his guard, had mysteriously disappeared.

If he had killed Owl Eyes, the body would be there as proof.

But there was no body of a departed brave, and this added to the mystery.

The very best scouts and trailers of the tribe were put upon the mystery to solve it, but without result.

Mounted warriors were sent off on the different trails leading from the village, and one party discovered the tracks of two unshod ponies leading around from the cliff path, which was so dangerous as to be almost considered impassable.

The tracks were fresh, and so the party of braves followed them across the valley.

They beheld a form approaching.

It was Owl Eyes. He was on foot, and coming along at a swinging trot.

He came to a halt as he met his comrades, and seeing that every eye was upon him for an explanation, he at once told his story of how the Spirit Nun had come and led him from the Medicine Lodge into the timber and far away.

The party of warriors heard the strange story of Owl Eyes, with deep interest.

Then runners were sent on the other trails to bring back the pursuing bands, and Owl Eyes was escorted to the village, where he told his strange story to Panther Eye and Thunder Cloud.

Not a redskin doubted the story, and all felt that the Great Spirit meant not that the Yellow-Haired Chief should die by their hands, and it impressed them deeply and unpleasantly. They greatly wanted the scalp of Custer, for they still believed Gaston, the courier, to be the famous cavalry chieftain.

The fact that the Spirit Nun had come to the village made old Panther Eye shake in his moccasins, and his son, Thunder Cloud, was also well frightened, though he was not so superstitious as his father, and had a more practical way of looking at things.

He did not wholly believe the ghostly aid rendered to the prisoner, and felt that there was some earthly agency in the matter.

Still, he could never account for the appearance of

the Spirit Nun; had any other warrior than Owl Eyes been on guard, Thunder Cloud would have doubted him.

But Owl Eyes was too brave a warrior, too ambitious to rise to the rank of chief, to even do one act that would destroy his prospects.

"I will see my friend, the chief of the Gold Ghouls," he muttered to himself, referring to Carlos, the outlaw leader of the Gold Ghouls.

"His tongue tells me straight," he added.

Having decided upon this course, Thunder Cloud rigged himself up in his best costume, mounted his fine horse, and rode out of the village upon his visit to the chief of the Gold Ghouls.

He had no cause to fear a foe in the Sioux country, for no large force of cavalry could penetrate there without his trusty redskin scouts, who were kept upon neutral ground, as it were, giving him notice.

Then, too, he had a firm ally in Carlos, who, though a white man, had spies that reported to him the movements of the cavalry from the fort, and word was quickly sent to the Indian village.

So without dread Thunder Cloud wended his way to the retreat of the outlaw leader.

This retreat was the main one of the Gold Ghouls, for there they had the protection of being in the Sioux country, where nothing but a very large force of soldiers dare pursue them, and Carlos was well posted as to the complement of men along the frontier, and knew that General Custer could not bring troops enough together to dare invade far into Thunder Cloud's domain.

Carlos had other "stations," as he called them, along the Overland trails, which ran from the mining country and settlements back to important points eastward.

In these stations several men were constantly kept, and, watching their chances, they would bring a stagecoach to a halt, rob the passengers, and sometimes get a rich haul.

Pursued, they would scatter to the camps and places of honest miners or settlers, or hide in their retreats, where it was impossible to find them without a large force.

But his "supply camp" and "booty den" was up the Sioux country, and here a force of over a score men were kept constantly on hand.

It was to this camp the Indian chief wended his way, and to reach it was no easy task.

In fact, without having been once over the trail, a good scout could never find it from being directed there.

Back in the very fastnesses of a rugged range of mountains, the camp was located; upon the shores of a body of water hidden away in a mass of cañons where no one would suspect that man could find an abiding place.

The Sioux chief held on his way along the mount-

hidge, and soon after descended into the valley where was the camp of the outlaws.

As he did so he heard the clatter of hoofs behind him, and, turning quickly, beheld the object of his search, Carlos himself.

The outlaw was splendidly mounted, and his saddle and bridle were of the finest make.

He was dressed in a pair of buckskin leggings, stuck in sp-boots, wore a gray sombrero, and was armed with a rifle and revolvers of the latest pattern.

His form was perfection of symmetry and strength, and his face was heavily bearded. His long hair rested upon his broad shoulders.

Excepting his eyes and nose, not a feature of his face was visible, so heavy was his beard and hair, while his sombrero was pulled down over his forehead to his brows. "Ho, chief! going to see me?" he called out, in a rich, deep voice, and Thunder Cloud replied in good English:

"Yes, my heart is troubled, and I have come to talk with my white brother."

"You are in luck to find me, for I am not often here, but circulate from place to place."

"Come, we will go to camp, have some supper, and talk over matters, for things don't seem to be making just right of late; Custer is too energetic and vicious in his blows; Buffalo Bill is trying to get us into a trap, and I learn one of my men, left on picket-duty, was killed by some of the fort scouts."

"Trouble with me, too, chief," said Thunder Cloud, and as they rode on to camp he told of the bold invading of his country by General Custer and Buffalo Bill, their escape from the trap he got them into, his following of Custer, and capture of Gaston, whom he supposed to be the general, and his escape through the agency of the Spirit Nun.

The Gold Ghoul chief had once saved Thunder Cloud from being burned at the stake by the Pawnees, and several times had warned the Sioux chief of an intended attack upon his village.

This accounted for the friendship between the two, and Thunder Cloud was very willing to have so brave an ally find refuge in his country, especially as he and his braves were wont to receive many presents for their protection of them.

Arriving at the log hut that the chief made his quarters when at his retreat, Carlos was greeted respectfully by his men, for he commanded his outlaw band with an iron hand, and calling to a negro to get supper, after staking out his and his red guest's horses, he led the way into the cabin.

Hardly had he done so, when a horseman came at a gallop along the point and dismounted at the door of the cabin.

The horseman was Burton, the deserter.

"Well, you look the worse for wear! What has happened to you?" and Don Carlos turned to the deserter and gazed at him fixedly.

His head was bound up, on account of the wound received at the hands of the mysterious girl, just as he thought he had Custer at his mercy, and his face was haggard and tired-looking.

"I've had a hard time, chief," was the response.

"You look it; but what has happened, for I supposed you were on the lower trail, where I told you to go."

"I went there, Captain Carlos, but found you had come here, so followed you."

"Well?"

"I did not kill General Custer."

"So I know, as the chief here, Thunder Cloud, captured him and carried him to his village."

"Ha! when was this?" and the deserter gazed earnestly at the Indian chief, who told the circumstance of his having captured, as he believed, the "Yellow-Haired Chief."

"Thunder Cloud, you are wrong; that was not General Custer," said the deserter.

"No, you are wrong, for the chief knows the general well."

"No, Captain Carlos, it was Gaston, the scout, whom the chief captured, and he is almost the image of General Custer, and prides himself upon it greatly, imitating him in many ways."

"I have heard of this man before, now I remember, Burton; but are you sure it was not General Custer that the chief caught."

"I know it, Captain Carlos, for I saw the chief ride off with his captive, and soon after General Custer came along and I ambushed him."

"Ha! you killed him?"

"No, sir; I did not; but he rode directly upon me, and I had the drop on him."

"But somebody, who, I know not, had the drop on me, and this wound in my head knocked me silly, for I was fired on, just as I was about to pull the trigger."

"General Custer evidently supposed I was dead, for he rode on, and the one who fired on me did not come to see the result, for I came to consciousness lying just as I had fallen."

"I searched around for trails, and saw the general's going on toward the fort, and another trail that was left by the one who shot me."

"It led away from the hills and across the prairies."

"Fearing that General Custer would send out to bury me, I hastened on my way, and went to the lower trail, captain, as you ordered me."

"The boys there had made a rich haul, capturing a

treasure-box on a coach, and so I said I would look you up and tell you, so, in spite of my severe wound, I have been constantly on the go."

"You have done well, Burton; but who could it have been that fired at you?"

"I do not know, captain; I wish I did."

"And the lower trail squad have done well, you say?"

"Yes, sir; they got a box of dust being sent over from the mines."

"This is good news, but something else than wishing to tell me this has brought you here?"

"Well, I confess it."

"Out with it."

"Well, captain, I fear I won't be much account until I get my revenge, and I was going to ask you to give me a leave for a few weeks, that I might dog General Custer's tracks and kill him."

"All right. I want him out of the way; for he is too busy a man to suit me, and will drive us off the trail if we don't mind."

"Thank you, sir; and I will start out to-morrow." And the deserter left the cabin to join the men at their supper, leaving the chief and outlaw captain to discuss another little plot to get rid of General Custer and Buffalo Bill at the same time.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CAUGHT.

Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell held on their way back toward the fort.

Remembering that the general had said he would follow with a force of cavalrymen to support Buffalo Bill, Surgeon Powell said:

"I guess we'll run upon the general and his squadron, Bill, before we get very far."

"It will be wrong if the general attempts to invade the Sioux country with a hundred soldiers, for that cunning chief, Thunder Cloud, can throw a thousand warriors against him," said Buffalo Bill.

"That is true; and they will be desperate, too, if they think General Custer is trying to strike their village."

"We have not five hundred fighting men for our long line of border to protect, and we should have ten times as many, for our weakness keeps the redskins on the war-path," Surgeon Powell said.

Toward sunset, as they were riding slowly along, they came a rise where a long view ahead could be obtained.

"Bravo, Bill! There come our boys in blue," cried Powell.

"Yes, there they are, and the general has fully a hundred with him, for, see, he is riding ahead."

It was but a short while before the scout and the sur-

geon were seen by General Custer, and he took off his hat to them.

"Hello, Cody! You look as though you were laid up for repairs!" cried the general as he drew near and saw the arm of the scout in a sling and that his face showed suffering.

"Yes, sir; I'm used up for a few days with a flesh wound and a bruised leg, for my horse fell upon me."

"Your Red Arrow animal?"

"Yes, sir."

"He was killed, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"And I left mine at the fort; but is Cody much hurt?"

"He will have to lay by for a few days, sir, though his injuries are not dangerous."

Then General Custer learned how his intended murderer, Burton, the deserter, had not been dead, and what happened to Buffalo Bill since parting with him.

"You were right, then, Bill, for they were Gold Ghouls and not redskins?"

"Yes, general."

"And what a bold game they played to kidnap Vassar's daughters."

"I tell you, those fellows must all be hanged, and we must hit the Sioux so hard they won't dare to leave their country."

"You have so small a force, general, that it will be hard to catch the Gold Ghouls, who take refuge in the Sioux country, or to follow up the redskins, hotly," said Buffalo Bill.

"By Jove! you are right, Cody. The government expects one soldier to fight and whip ten Indians."

"We will show strength by going into camp here on the border of the settlement with what men I have, and send back to the fort for tents and supplies, for if Thunder Cloud intends to strike the settlement, we will be on hand to receive him; but let us find a good place and make a camp, and, Cody, you can go on to the fort with the party I send there after tents and supplies."

"I would rather remain in camp with you, general."

"Certainly, if you wish, for I would like to have you as your advice will be good, if you are not in fighting trim."

A fine spot for camping was found, and the troopers set to work to make it as comfortable as possible, as they expected they would remain there for some little time.

A courier was sent back to the fort for all that was needed, and others were dispatched to the settlements to tell the settlers to be on the watch for redskin raids and that a camp of soldiers had been established miles nearer to them than was Fort Fearless.

The supply train arrived in good time, tents were

his pitched, guards were set, and several scouts were sent off toward the Sioux country to reconnoiter, but with orders not to go over the line into the redskin territory, only to watch for any movements that might be intended by Thunder Cloud and his braves.

The second day after the establishment of the camp, a man was seen approaching across the prairie.

He came on at a steady pace, and, as he drew near and was recognized, a loud cheer went up from the soldiers.

"It is Gaston, the courier, general," cried Captain Taylor, who had half of his company of cavalry in the camp, going up to the quarters of the general, as soon as the courier was recognized.

All was excitement now among the soldiers, for Gaston had escaped, that was certain.

As Gaston rode into camp he was greeted with a shout of welcome.

Raising his hat in response, he rode up to the general's tent and dismounted.

The general, Buffalo Bill, who was lying upon a blanket; Surgeon Powell and Captain Taylor were there and gave him a hearty greeting.

"Sit down, Gaston, for you look tired, and those blond locks of yours haven't been attended to of late, I guess," said the general, who was often wont to joke the courier-scout upon his blond hair, so much like his own.

"No, sir, for the first thing the redskins stole was my comb and my looking-glass."

"I see you have your weapons."

"Oh, sir, I got them all back with my freedom, and I'll tell you all about it"

The courier then told how he was captured and carried off to the Sioux village, and that he had given up all hope, when suddenly a form glided into the Medicine Lodge, cut his bonds and told him to follow her.

He did so, and the starlight had shown him that she was dressed like a nun.

"A nun, Gaston?"

"Yes, general."

"Who was she?"

"I do not know, sir; but she had already led the redskin guard who was over men far away into the timber."

"But the nun, Gaston?"

"She uttered no word, sir, after bidding me follow her, and I saw her no more after she set me free."

"She is the most mysterious creature I ever heard of; but what her object was to masquerade as a nun in an Indian camp, I cannot understand," General Custer said.

"I wonder if she cannot be a Sister of Charity who has given up her life to try to convert the Sioux by living among them?" said Gaston.

"She will have a gigantic task to perform, muttered Powell.

"General," said Buffalo Bill, "I remember that several years ago a nun was captured with a wagon train with which she and others were going into New Mexico, and nothing was ever heard of her again, and she was given up as dead."

"I wonder if this mysterious woman can be that nun?" asked General Custer. "You have doubtless hit it, Cody; but why on earth was she not willing to leave the wretches when she had a chance to do so with us?"

No one could answer that question.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE RED ARROW.

Buffalo Bill was not one to lie up in camp, while able to get about, and a couple of days' rest made him feel very nearly like himself again.

On the morning of the third day, he mounted his horse, determined to scout about the border of the Indian country and have a look for himself how matters stood.

"I think I'll look in on the Vassar Ranch to-night, and scout out to-morrow from there," he had said to Powell, who merely told him to take good care of himself, and redressed his wound and leg for him, though Buffalo Bill told him he was all right again.

The scout had ridden a score of miles, and was following a well-timbered trail, when suddenly before him fell an arrow.

It was stained a bright crimson, feathers and all, and dismounting, the scout picked it up.

"It belongs to that mysterious girl, my unknown ally—she is again shadowing me," he muttered, as he took off his hat and looked about him.

The next moment the Girl of Mystery appeared, riding out of a ravine, and mounted upon her white horse.

"We meet again, miss."

"Yes, and I have again sought you to warn you of danger—I was going to your camp if necessary; but saw you coming, so sent that arrow. Are you alone?"

"Yes."

"Your general rides about much alone, and is now down the valley, while his white foe, Burton, is in ambush on the trail yonder to kill him."

"You can look to him."

"But you will find there with him, a white man, his worst foe, and yours, though you do not suspect him."

"The general visited him this morning, and was to go on to Vassar's Ranch, returning this afternoon, and he has gone to place Burton, the deserter, on the watch."

"I will show you how to reach the spot and not be seen—and leave them to you—Ah!"

She uttered the exclamation at beholding a horseman ride into view.

"It is my pard, the surgeon scout."

"Yes, and I am glad, for you will be in less danger now, for they are two, and you will now equal them."

"Ah, Powell! I believe you followed me."

"Just what I did, Bill, for I did not like you scouting alone; but you have company, I see."

"Yes, my Girl Shadower, and she has news for me, and work for both of us, as you shall hear."

"Come! I will show you the way," said the girl abruptly, and she wheeled her horse and rode on, the two pards following her.

It was a ride of about half a dozen miles before she halted, and then she said:

"The deserter you know well, his companion is the leader of the Gold Ghouls, and no one suspects him."

"Once your prisoner, or dead, his men can be readily crushed, for mount his horse and he will lead you to the outlaw retreat. Only have many soldiers with you."

"If matters do not turn out as I hope, I will see you again—yes, very soon, for I am tired, very tired, of all this—"

Without another word she wheeled her horse and dashed away.

"Well, Doc, things are coming to a focus it seems, and the mysteries that we cannot solve will soon be known, for I have faith in that girl."

"As I have; but now to find Burton and his companion, whoever he is," and the two pards left their horses and walked along toward the point the Girl Shadower had pointed out to them as the spot where Burton and his companion were in ambush.

They were not long in reaching there, and found themselves within pistol range of the two men.

One was Burton, watching the trail along which General Custer was to ride that afternoon upon his return to camp.

The other was the young rancher, Gabriel Golden.

"Ready, Powell!"

"Yes, Bill."

"Now!" and Buffalo Bill called out:

"Hands up, or die!"

The two men sprang to their feet and began firing their rifles toward the foes they did not see.

But Buffalo Bill and the surgeon scout also fired, seeing that the two men would not surrender, and they fell in their tracks.

The deserter fell dead under Surgeon Powell's shot, but his companion still lived, though he was dying.

"It's all up—you know the truth," he said, faintly.

"You are the chief of the Gold Ghouls?"

"Yes, living two lives, for I was a devil from boyhood.

"As I have to go, I have no mercy for any man now, so capture, kill and hang my gang, for—"

He said no more—death had checked his utterance.

"Bill, who would have suspected it?"

"No one, Powell."

"I will go for our horses, while you remain here, as the general may pass at any moment."

The surgeon scout walked rapidly away, for Buffalo Bill's leg was lame, and as he neared the ridge he was startled, for there, on the ground, lying by the side of her white horse, was the girl shadower of Buffalo Bill.

The surgeon scout sprung to her side, for she was not dead, yet dying from a bullet wound in her side, at the same time calling Buffalo Bill to come.

She smiled sadly, and the surgeon took a hasty glance at the wound.

"I am dying, and it is better so," she said.

"Yes, I am sorry to tell you that you must die."

"Who shot you?"

"One of those two men when you attacked them—it was a random shot as I sat on my horse watching you," and she smiled faintly as Buffalo Bill approached, his face showing the sorrow he felt at beholding the girl, while he seemed to realize what had happened even before Surgeon Powell quickly made it known to him in a few words.

"Can you do nothing for her, Frank?"

"Nothing, Bill, except to remain with her to the end."

"Will you not tell us now who you are?" said Buffalo Bill, kneeling by her side.

"I will tell you now, for there is no reason why I should not."

She spoke in a low tone and evidently with difficulty.

"I am a white girl and have no Indian blood in my veins."

"But my mother once was kind to a young Indian brave and he loved her."

"But she married my father, a ranger captain, and the Indians hating him, came one night and burned his home, killed him and carried my mother off captive."

"The young brave who had loved her had become chief of the tribe, and he at once took her from her cruel foes and tenderly cared for her."

"Several months after reaching the Indian village, I was born, and do you see this red arrow I have on my forehead?"

"Well, it is a birthmark, and it made the Indians regard me as a child of the Great Spirit."

"Broken-hearted, my mother remained among the Sioux; but she brought me up as well as she could, taught me to speak my own tongue, told me of her people and the great world, and Thunder Cloud, whose wife she became, promised that I should some day return to my race."

"But this birthmark made me ashamed, and when my

another died, two years ago, I still continued to remain among the Sioux, for I held great power over them.

"That wicked chief, Carlos, whom now you know as he was, sought to kidnap me from the Sioux, although they protected him, and make me his wife, and he sent two of his men to capture me.

"One of them I shot, and it was from the other that General Custer saved me.

"From that day I determined to save the palefaces from the redskins, and you know how I have done it.

"Knowing the dread all had of a poor nun captive, who took her own life by springing from a cliff, I got her clothes and pretended to be the spirit of that poor girl, and it has helped me, and helped your friend to escape.

"Knowing the movements of the Gold Ghouls and Sioux, I was able to do much good.

"Now Gold Hair is content to die."

She folded her hands as she spoke, and said no more.

Presently she simply added:

"Good-by."

After that she could not, or would not speak, and in two hours more she was dead.

Most tenderly the two scouts watched by her until the last, and then as they stood by the side of the dead girl, Buffalo Bill saw General Custer coming along the trail, and hailed him.

He soon rode up and heard with surprise and pain the story of the poor girl, while he said:

"She shall be taken to the fort and buried there with military honors, for well has she deserved it."

Then turning to Buffalo Bill, he continued:

"Cody, you remain here with these two dead outlaws, while Surgeon Powell goes on with me to camp with this poor girl's body, and I will at once send it on under guard to the fort.

"At dark, I shall leave my camp with half my force, and you, Cody, can mount that outlaw's horse and let him guide us to the Gold Ghouls' camp, so we can attack them at dawn and wipe them out.

"But it is a great surprise to me to have Golden unmasked, and I fear it will hurt one of Vassar's girls, whom I have an idea liked the villain.

"But now we must get away, Powell, as it is a long ride to the camp of the outlaw, if it is where Cody thinks it is."

The form of the unfortunate girl was wrapped in her handsome blanket, and mounting his horse, Dr. Powell had it handed up to him to carry in his arms.

Then the general and the surgeon rode away, and Buffalo Bill led his horse down to where lay the two dead outlaws, after which he sought their animals, hitched a quarter of a mile away from the place of ambush.

A thorough search of the bodies by Buffalo Bill gave proof sufficient of Golden's lawless and double life, for a disguise was found upon him, of long beard and wig, and other things which went to make up the Captain Carlos, whom Chief Thunder Cloud had visited in his retreat.

Other important finds upon the body were papers that told just who the man was, and that he had then a well-arranged plot to kidnap the Vassar girls and kill their father, while a number of ranches in the settlement were to be destroyed.

Toward evening, Surgeon Powell and half a dozen soldiers arrived, to bury the bodies of the two outlaws.

"They are to wait here, Bill, until the general and the command come along, while we are to go to the Vassars for supper, and to tell all we have discovered about Golden.

"Later the general will come along the trail, and you, mounted on Golden's horse, will lead the way to the retreat," said Surgeon Powell.

Their plan was carried out without a hitch, and Settler Vassar and his daughters learned of the wicked career of Golden; but if either of the sisters had loved the man, his evil life had quickly turned the feeling to hate, as neither showed that they deeply cared for the handsome young villain.

The general and his command came along after night-fall and mounted upon the horse of the outlaw chief, Buffalo Bill led the way.

The splendid animal went without a break to the retreat of the outlaws, and the soldiers were upon the Gold Ghouls before they suspected danger, and a short, sharp, deadly fight ended in the complete wiping out of the band and capture of all of their booty.

Back to the fort went the victors, while the Sioux, learning of the defeat of their outlaw allies, were glad to retreat further into the fastnesses of the mountains.

To-day the fort is but a ruin; the gallant Custer afterward fell with his "Brave Three Hundred" in Wyoming, but amid the graves that are yet to be seen at the old military post is one that is still cared for by the daughters of Settler Vassar—long since laid to his rest—while Ruby and Pearl have children of their own gathered about them, for both married army officers, and fine husbands they made, too.

That grave bears the inscription:

"A Girl Captive of the Sioux."

THE END.

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